Pilot: Navigating Personhood Within Science Fiction

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ABSTRACT

Representations of the 'other' in media often exist only to further the narratives of the 'dominant' for the benefit of an assumedly-dominant audience, and are otherwise unseen or misrepresented. This results in the other being denied genuine reflections of themselves at a social and cultural level (Diaz as cited in Donahue, 2009). Through visual analysis and design, this research explores the nature of the term personhood - defined as character and qualities regarding who can be a 'person' - through media representations of both the human other and the fictional alien other. The alien within science fiction is visible as a reaction to our very human history of colonialism (Diaz, 2014) and in particular to the categorization of the human and non-human other. The resulting characterisation, relationships and narratives of the alien become limited by its adherence or lack thereof to the features of the dominant human. This manifests in how personhood is ascribed in media (according to gender performance, sexuality, race, physicality and other categories) to both aliens and their real-life reflection, the human other. Pilot culminates in an interactive intervention blending film, game and literature within a two-player character-driven narrative that discusses settler-colonialism, relationships and personhood through the lens of both the alien and the human other.

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INTRODUCTION

The alien within science fiction is the typified 'other', the unknowable creature disturbing in its similarities and dangerous in its differences. This project examines relationships of the other through the lens of the alien being a reaction to, or reflection of, the human other. The other is that which is positioned “as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way” (Melani, 2009) to the 'dominant'. The dominant states itself to be the norm - the most natural and true and ideal - and from there it follows that those who differ, whether it be by race, gender, sexuality, religion, ideology, culture, species or other factors, are deemed lesser. The concept of the other encompasses animals and the land as well as people, and repositions the human other as, like the non-human other, a resource that exists to be utilized by the dominant (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 4). The dominant/other binary functions as a circular, self-reinforcing and insidiously invisible system under colonialism, positing that those who are the dominant are the ideal human through the act of being able to (and choosing to) colonize others, and that they and their beliefs are more valuable than those they oppress (Tuck & Yang, p. 6).

Science fiction “[has] roots in the traumas of colonialism” (Diaz, as cited in Parham, 2015) - a position supported by Reider (as cited in Freedman, 2010), who notes that science fiction as a genre has almost always been inseparably linked to the “social, political, economic, and military system of oppression called colonialism” (p. 177). The human other is limited by the degree of their adherence to the features of the dominant, and therefore the alien other is limited in narrative roles and relationships not only by how closely it resembles the human, but the *dominant* human. For an alien to access partial personhood within narrative, they typically must adhere to certain dominant concepts around what it means to be a person. Intelligence, physicality, social relations, language, sexuality, gender - the more the other resembles the idealized (white, Western, normative gender-performing) human, the more likely they are to access positive or complex relationships within narratives. Conversely, not meeting these criteria means the alien or human other is increasingly likely to have a narrative position of either a non-person (varren, figure 10), a minor character (hanar, figure 6), or the enemy (xenomorph, figure 9).

Pilot is linked to my own experiences through the ways in which I, like the characters within, exist in an intersection between the other and the dominant. As a queer person and as a woman, I am the other. Conversely, as an able-bodied, middle-class pakeha, the descendant of European settlers, I am the dominant. These facets of my own

identity impact Pilot through moves to prioritize the other within narrative and character design, and to support marginalized creators through outsourcing music. Underlying the project is an examination of how the alien other is denied or given access to personhood through narrative and in-text relationships, and how this parallels the human other. Through visual analysis, Pilot examines science fiction works with a focus on the intersection between *the relationships and roles of the alien* and *adherence to the dominant human conceptualizations of personhood*. The concept of personhood is explored throughout - a person being that which has "the ability to have sensations or experiences" (Lyons, 2012) - through examination of how the (in) accessibility of visible personhood to the human and alien other is compounded by, in particular, gender and sexuality. This leads to an interactive intervention which encourages players to engage with the other as a person - whether that other is alien or human - through a two-player choice-based mechanic within a structured narrative.

SCIENCE FICTION AND THE OTHER
1.1 THE ROOTS OF SCIENCE FICTION

Colonialism and science fiction are intrinsically linked, to the degree that the defining narratives and tropes of science fiction could not be comprehended without our own colonial history (Diaz, 2013). Science fiction is history reworked, reframed, retold with a different cast and under different skies. The genre emerged from "the period of most intense imperialist penetration of the non-European world—the later nineteenth century" (Rieder as cited in Freedman, 2010, p. 176) and gained popularity throughout countries engaging in imperialism (p. 176). Tuck and Yang (2012) define colonialism as both "the expropriation of fragments of Indigenous worlds, animals, plants and human beings, [extracted] in order to transport them to - and build the wealth, the privilege, or feed the appetites of - the colonizers, who get marked as the first world" (p. 5) and the "biopolitical and geopolitical management of people, land, flora and fauna within the 'domestic' borders of the imperial nation" (p. 6). It positions land, animals and people as resources to be utilized by the colonizers. Within this project, colonialism is contextualized through science fiction narratives, particularly regarding the dominant/other construct. Despite being built upon historical actions taken against Indigenous and marginalized peoples, science fiction often finds these same people conspicuously absent (Diaz, 2013). People of colour, women, queer people, non-Western cultures, and so on - those who are othered, within the Western sphere of this project (Low, 2014) - become invisible within their own narratives.

The invasion narrative is central to Pilot and to an understanding of the links between science fiction and colonisation. Whether explorers, conquerors or settlers, invaders historically travelled to distant lands and imposed their culture, beliefs and social constructs upon Indigenous populations, usually under the guise of enlightenment and progression and through the means of greater technological and military power (Rieder as cited in Freedman, 2010, p. 180). Yet in science fiction, we often find the tables have turned. Humans - typically white, male, western humans - become those who are unjustly invaded, and aliens - the other exemplified - become the invaders. Tuck and Yang (2012) work primarily in examining settler colonialism in education, but their framework of 'settler moves to innocence' applies nonetheless. This is identified as a process in which the settler claims innocence through "strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege [...] yet settler moves to innocence are hollow, they only serve the settler" (p. 10). This is evidenced in the repositioning of the settler as Indigenous and the (alien) other as colonizer in a calculated role reversal. The intended audience are

the dominant, those who continue to benefit from colonialism, who become repositioned as both victims and saviours in contrast to the oppressive other. They can then view themselves not as *benefiting* from historical colonial practices, but as being first victimized and then rising above their oppressors. Suddenly, this becomes a redemption narrative. They are, indeed, repositioned as victorious *through virtue of being the dominant* - they are able to win against all odds and do what no one else can *because* they are masculine heterosexual white men. If there is a woman, a person of colour or a queer person visible, they typically have supportive rather than central roles. The other in this repurposed narrative is the alien, who is resoundly defeated in a way that not only feels righteous but that justifies any atrocities committed in achieving that victory. The new story here, then, is quite the same as the old one - it is about the (fictitiously oppressed but real-world) dominant overcoming the (fictitious stand-in for the real-world) other. But this time around we are all intended, guiltless, to celebrate it.

1.2 GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN MEDIA

The crux of Pilot is relationships involving the other. Broadly, this considers relationships that are platonic, romantic, sexual, antagonistic, sympathetic and/or commodifying - in other words, the potential interactions that the alien other can engage in, whether it be with the dominant, the other, or those in the intersections between. To do so, Pilot first examines the roles and relationships of the human other in media.

The Bechdel test, created by cartoonist Alison Bechdel in 'Dykes to Watch Out For' (1985) is a popular, albeit limited, examination of female relationships in media. To pass, media needs to contain two named women who talk to each other about something other than a man. Effectively, it calls attention to "not the number of women we see on screen, but the depth of their stories, and the range of their concerns" (Ulaby, 2008), although it cannot be taken as a conclusive indicator of whether media is positive towards women. The Bechdel Test Movie List, as of May 2016, tested 6517 films - only 57.83% passed, half of which were only due to women talking about children or marriage (Power, 2009).

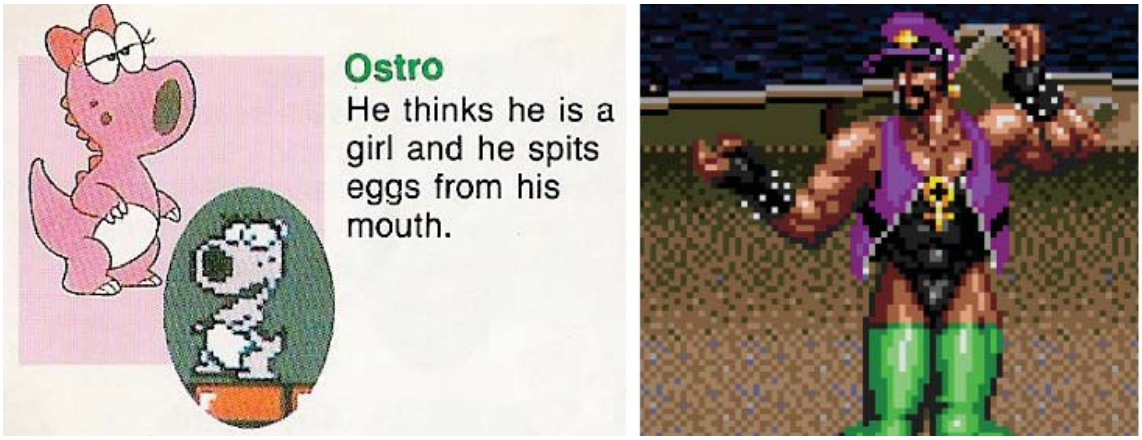

Figure 1. Birdo (left), a transgender character in 'Super Mario Bros. 2', mistakenly identified as 'Ostro'; and Ash (right), a gay enemy from 'Streets of Rage'. (Source: Super Mario Bros. 2 Instruction Booklet, 1988, p. 27; and Sega, 1994)

Figure 2. Flea (left), a gender-non-conforming character in 'Chrono Trigger'; and Poison (right), a transgender woman enemy from 'Final Fight'. (Source: Square, 1995; and Capcom, 1989)

The roles of LGBT characters in media are similiarly limited, particularly in game design. The first video games involving LGBT characters began with the likes of ‘Moonmist’ (Infocom, 1986) and ‘Super Mario Bros 2’ (Nintendo, 1988). These were often stereotyped or offensive caricatures, positioned as minor background characters, comic relief or enemies (see Figure 1). A focus on lesbians, transgender women and gender-nonconforming people spoke of an assumed voyeuristic male, straight and cisgender audience who was intended to see these characters as comic relief or sexual objects (see Figure 2). It wasn’t until ‘Dracula Unleashed’ (ICOM Simulations, 1993) that a queer character was given a voice-acted role - albeit a lecherous one.

Since then, stereotypes have begun to develop into more nuanced understandings of queer and gender diverse audiences and characters, as seen in games like ‘Mass Effect’ (BioWare, 2007-2012), ‘Skyrim’ (Bethesda, 2011) and ‘Gone Home’ (The Fullbright Company, 2013). The field of independant game development, in particular, has given marginalized creators opportunities without requiring the wealth and expertise of larger game design companies. These have led to a variety of representations and narratives of the other in games such as ‘Sabbat’ (Oh No Problems, 2015), which discusses gender transition through demonic metaphors, and ‘We Know The Devil’ (Bee, Schwartz, Lambert, Blue, Kreyling, & Fu, 2015), a coming-of-age visual novel about gay and transgender teenage girls. Created by and for marginalized people, these works occupy a unique position in the field of game design (Harvey, 2014).

1.3 WHO CREATES, WHO CONSUMES

The following visual analysis outlines the roles of the other as audiences, participants and creators. In examining the 100 most popular films of all time (see Figure 3), the other is consistently rarely visible, valuable or prioritized (Low, 2014). Of the mere eight people of colour as protagonists, six were Will Smith and another was a cartoon. A similar study (Lauzen, 2015) examined films released in 2014 and found only 29% percent of all lead characters were women - 74% of which were white. Indeed, audiences were "almost as likely to see another-worldly female as they were to see a Latina or Asian female character" (p. 2). When this coincides with the pattern of people of colour being cast as non-human characters, the only time many people recognise their likenesses on-screen may be under alien prosthetics.

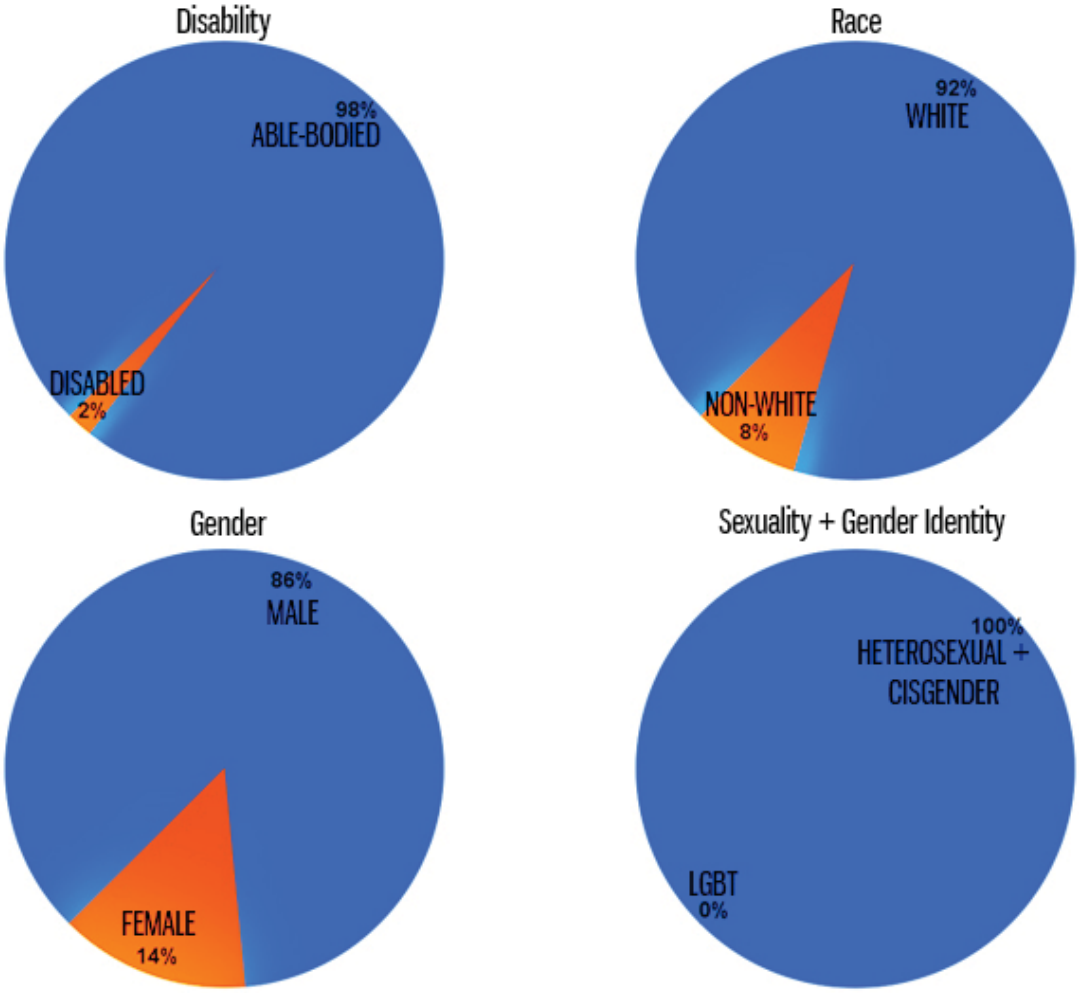

Figure 3: Statistics on lead characters in a study of the 100 top-grossing films of all time in regards to disability, gender, race and sexual/gender identity. (Source: Low, 2014)

In a study of the top-grossing 150 games released in 2008, Williams (2009) examined the race and gender of playable characters and reported similar trends (see Figure 4). Zero playable characters were Latino/a, for instance, despite Latino/a children playing more video games than white children, while African-Americans were primarily visible in "[roles] that reinforce stereotypes" (2009).

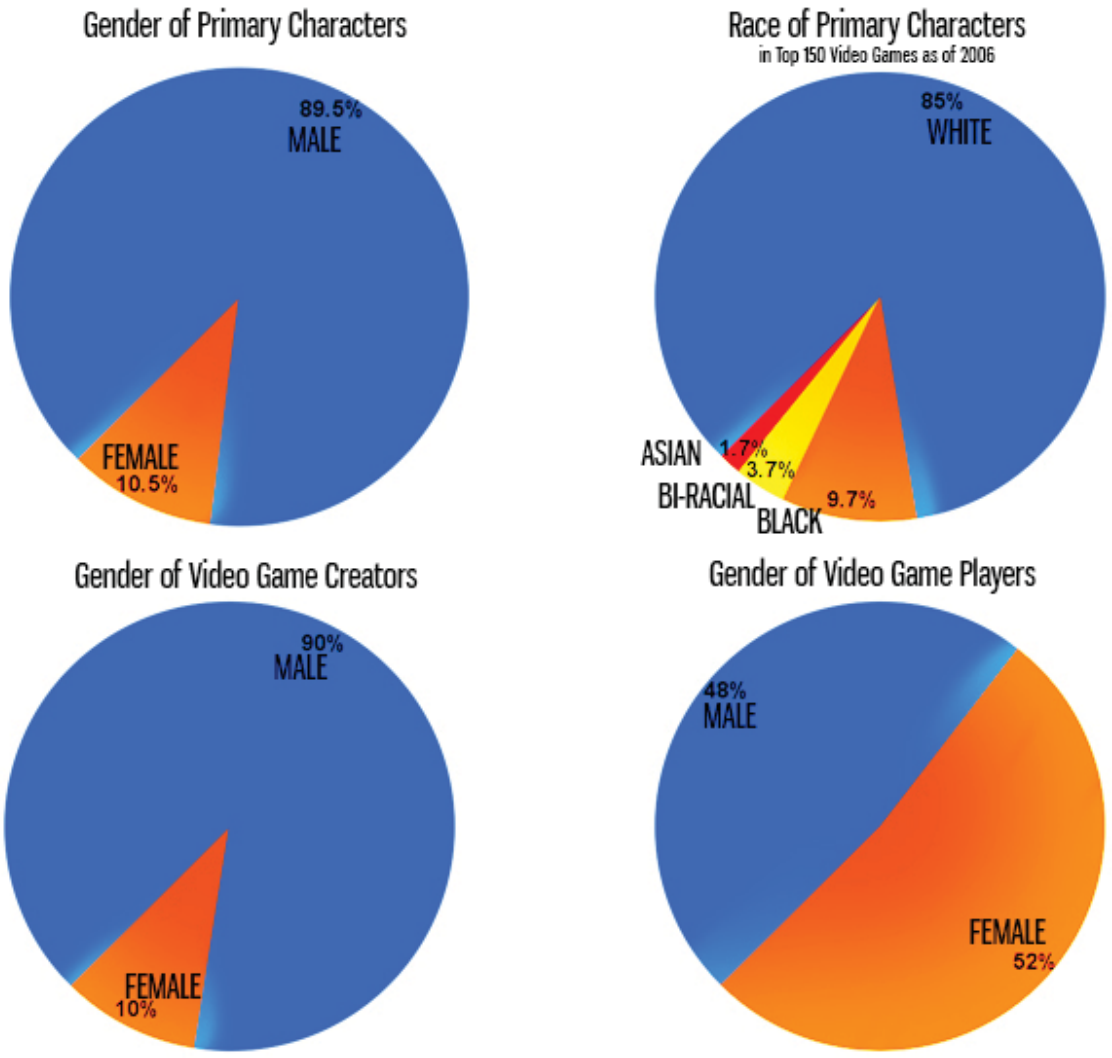

Figure 4. Statistics on games and gamers. (Source: Stuart, 2011; Jayanth, 2014; Williams et al, 2009)

This is not to say the other is unacknowledged. Increasingly, games enable players to design the physical appearance of their character in non-gendernormative ways ('Saint's Row IV', Volition, 2013) or to engage in queer relationships. Regardless, statistics over-whelmingly do suggest a privileging of white, male and heteronormative characters, audiences and creators. Subverting these patterns means considering who characters and narratives are speaking to and for, and actively moving to prioritize the other.

PRECEDENTS
2.1 THE LINE BETWEEN A PERSON AND THE OTHER

The following visual analysis examines how the medium of production affects characterisation, narrative, interactions and most importantly the *availability and scope* of relationships involving the alien other. Figure 5 maps physical appearance (via proximity to the idealized appearance of the dominant human) and sentience (via proximity to a dominant human understanding of intelligence and personhood). It also considers the Friend/Enemy (in relation to the protagonist) alignment of characters through colour-coding. Aliens are sourced from a selection of books (BOOK), games (GAME) and film/television (FILM) and labelled according to primary source material. Exact placement is debatable - both physicality and sentience are contentious descriptors for difficult-to-define concepts. My limited knowledge of all listed source material may also skew the graph. However, it does display an important overarching pattern: the physical design of aliens is linked to their sentience in a manner reflective of the privileging of the dominant, and this impacts their narrative roles.

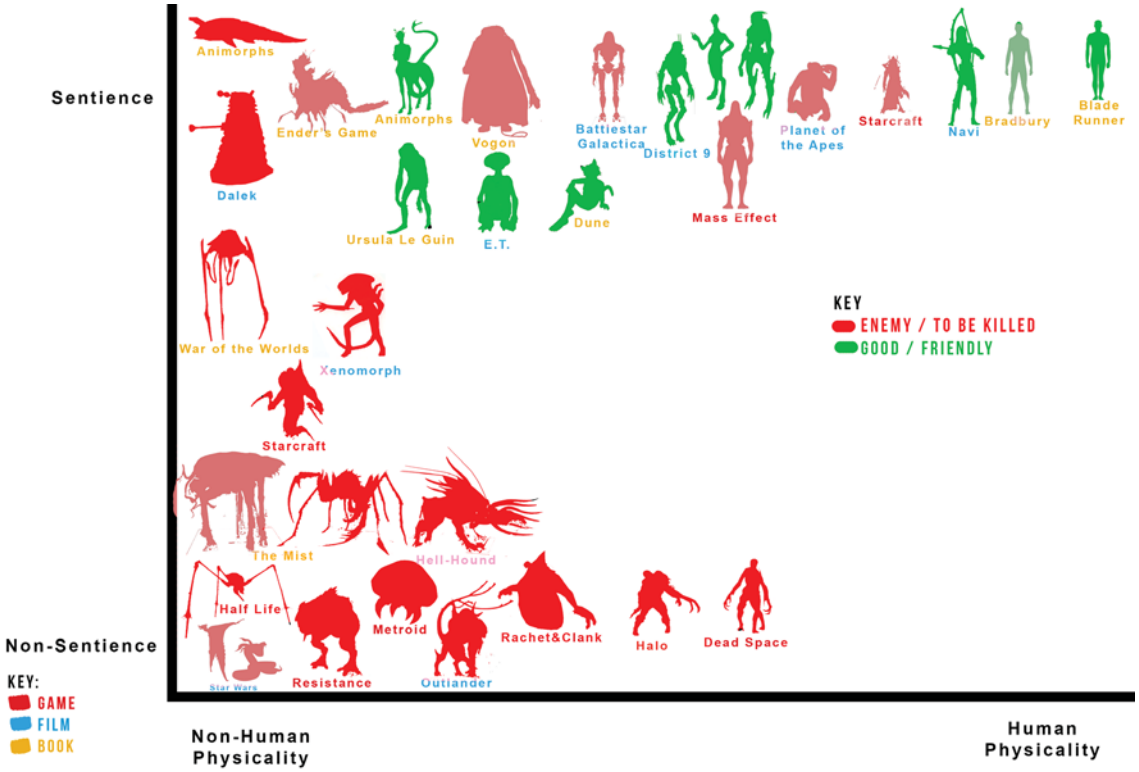

Figure 5. Moore, B. (2016). *Sentience vs. Physicality in alien design in literature, film and game design, with accompanying narrative roles.*

The closer an alien comes to a human estimation of 'sentience' - technology use, language, social structure - the more likely it will physically resemble a human and to have positive narrative roles and relationships. Conversely, the further from human sentience an alien was, the more likely it would ascribe to non-human physicality

and be an enemy. The outliers here were ‘possessed’ humans, who were effectively alien through parasitisation. This analysis found books tended to explore the widest visual design range of sentient aliens - from Bradbury’s practically-human martians ('The Martian Chronicles', 1950) to Applegate’s slug-like yeerks ('Animorphs', 1996-2001). Games tended to position the enemy alien as barely-sentient ('Resistance', Insomniac Games, 2006; 'Half-Life', Valve, 1998), while those who were sentient and humanoid were given the roles of people ('Mass Effect', BioWare, 2007-2012; 'Starcraft', Blizzard Entertainment, 1998; the Navi from 'Avatar', Cameron, 2009). Film and television followed similar trends. Overall, aliens in the roles of 'people' typically adhere to the dominant concepts of what a person is.

A comparison of two alien species in the ‘Mass Effect’ series exemplifies this (see Figure 6). Asari are presented as nuanced and complex people in a variety of roles and relationships: heroes or villains, scientists, friends, enemies, or romantic possibilities. Hanar, conversely, all have the same voice actor and occupy only minor roles; two shopkeepers, one religious preacher, and one minor villain who later dies. This follows a consistent pattern of (dominant) humanoid physicality correlating to complex narrative roles.

Figure 6. Asari (left) and Hanar (right). (Source: ‘Mass Effect’, BioWare, 2007-2012)

Another key relationship of note between the human and alien other is that the human other often find themselves in the *role* of the alien. Zoe Saldana, for example, is an African-American/Dominican actress who played both the computer-generated blue alien woman Neytiri in 'Avatar' (Cameron, 2009) and the green alien woman Gamora in 'Guardians of the Galaxy' (Feige & Gunn, 2014). Idris Elba stars in four major films in 2016 - three voice-acting animal roles and one in 'Star Trek Beyond' (Abrams & Lin, 2016) as an alien villain who requires so many grey facial prosthetics that Elba himself is quite invisible. Lupita Nyong'o's most notable roles since 2012 were a CGI alien - the orange Maz Kanata in 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' (Kennedy, Arndt & Abrams, 2015) - and a voice-acted animal in 'The Jungle Book' (Taylor & Favreau, 2016) (Buchanan, 2016). Behind the 'Alien' (Carroll, Giler, Hill & Scott, 1979) xenomorph, perhaps the most famous extraterrestrial of them all, is Nigerian actor Bolaji Badejo - and yet the man who brought to life the most iconic alien design in the history of film remains almost entirely unrecognised (see Figure 7). The casting of the nonwhite other as the alien other results in many sci-fi actors of colour having to change their skin tone and physicality in order to access partial onscreen personhood.

The interaction of physical and social design with narrative roles and relationships is reflective of similar patterns regarding the human other. The dominant correlates intelligence, personhood and idealized white European male physicality (Sussman, 2014, p. 270) in a manner which has long been used to control and devalue the lives and cultures of othered people. The idea that a physical self (that of the dominant) can be innately imbued with certain positive traits infers the existence of a self (that of the other) that differs both in physicality and innate nature. Furthermore, it infers a right to rule - an *imperative* to rule - upon the dominant, who by their own mechanisms have deemed themselves the only people capable of doing so. It is concerning, therefore, to see these patterns replicated in media praised as being otherwise progressive, whether it be through the demeaning and diminishing the value and roles of the human or the alien other.

Figure 7. Bolaji Badejo on the set of Alien. (Source: Sibthorp, 1978)

2.2 MANIFESTATIONS OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER

Whether alien or human, male is the default (McNally, 2015). The idea that men are unmarked and women are marked is old news - consider Eve being born from Adam's rib, *she* always a variant of *he*. This analysis examines how when aliens exist outside of a binary system of gender - those with many genders or no gender at all, aliens that reproduce asexually or through methods unrecognisable - their difference exists to contrast them against the normative gender presentation and performance of the dominant human. Meyda Yegenoglu (1998) discusses how "sexuality [...] governs and structures the subject's every relation with the [O]ther" (p. 26). Although her work is contextualized within Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism*, it is relevant through the manner in which the commodification of sexuality is bound into the formation of the other. "[O]therness is achieved simultaneously through sexual as well as cultural modes of differentiation" (p. 26) in both real and science fiction contexts, meaning the formation and control of the category of other relates not only to the way in which the other is seen to be an object, but that way in which it is positioned as a *sexual* object.

Lugones (2007) argues that the contemporary system of "gender itself is a colonial introduction, a violent introduction consistently and contemporarily used to destroy peoples, cosmologies, and communities as the building ground of the 'civilized' West" (p. 186). This entailed the construction of a binary system of gender (male as the default, female as the lesser opposite of the male) and rigidly outlining how each gender must perform, appear and interact. These categories are also tightly framed within whiteness - the correct way to be a man is to be a *white* man, and so forth. Since "colonizing land [...] also meant colonizing the women inhabiting that land" (Lledin, 2012), women of colour under colonialism were made other both through being both non-white and a woman. This intersection resulted in their being cast as "uncivilized, hypersexualized, sexually inferior, and savage" (Lledin, 2012). Not people but bodies, not valued but used, sexuality became imposed upon the other via the white male colonizer gaze. Hypersexualization came hand in hand with desexualization and the loss of agency - a person cast externally as foremost a sexual being becomes also a non-being, unable to control or experience or express healthy positive sexuality, only visible as a vessel for the desires of the dominant.

The desexualization of gay men in media presents another manifestation of this. The signifiers of a romantic and/or sexual relationship onscreen - visual, physical and voice cues between participants - are majorly absent when it comes to gay male relationships. 'Modern Family''s (Levitan, Lloyd & Winer, 2009-present) Cam and

Mitch, for example, are a sanitized, desexualized "safest version of a gay male couple (Moore as cited in Zepps, 2015) who display limited relationship cues in comparison to equivalent heterosexual couples (Patterson, 2015). They are also notably white, gender-conforming and otherwise adhere to the ideas of the dominant, as are many visible queer people in media. This trend of *telling* rather than *showing* the other allows media to position itself as progressive without deviation from the norm in either action or assumed audience.

People who exist outside of the male/female binary are not merely a creation of science fiction, but within the traditional western gender binary they become othered. These include historical and cultural considerations of gender, such as fa'afafine (third-gender people in traditional Samoan culture who are assigned male at birth and "express feminine gender identities in a range of ways" (Schmidt, 2001, p.1)) or two-spirit (First Nations people often described as "[embodying] both male and female characteristics" (Rivas, 2015)), alongside the recent growing awareness of intersex, transgender and nonbinary people. Being gender-conforming and therefore accessing personhood under colonialism is, for many people, innately unaccessible - which was the way it was intended.

2.3 ALIEN PERFORMANCES OF GENDER

This lays the groundwork for an analysis of gender and sexuality within science fiction. Pilot examines how alien design often links gender performance with personhood, much as is done with humans. Alien design will fall, broadly, into one of three categories (or a combination thereof):

1) *The safe alien*, which is desirable and acceptable *because* it is a safely consumable and objectifiable other adhering to appropriate conditions of 'humanity'.

Figure 8. Examples of the safe female-coded alien. (Sources: 'Mass Effect', 2007-2012; 'Guardians of the Galaxy', 2014; 'Avatar', 2009; 'The Fifth Element', 1997)

Audiences are comfortable engaging with these characters as sexual or romantic objects in the knowledge that despite being aliens, they are foremost comprehensible through being gendered. They are humanoid and sexually dimorphic in the manner of (the dominant ideal of) humans - men having muscle, no breasts and male voice actors, women having (see figure 8) breasts, hourglass figures, female voice actors and 'beautiful' faces. They have human-like or greater intelligence alongside similar social

and cultural structures. They are often marked as alien only through backstory, dialogue, setting, skin colour (Gamora) and minor physical features (Liara's head crests, Neytiri's tail) that do not conflict with human markers of gender. They conventionally have access to sexual or romantic relationships within media, and are also more likely access to platonic, companion or (intelligent) enemy roles.

2) *The unsafe alien*, for whom behaviour, gender and sexuality become predatory tools.

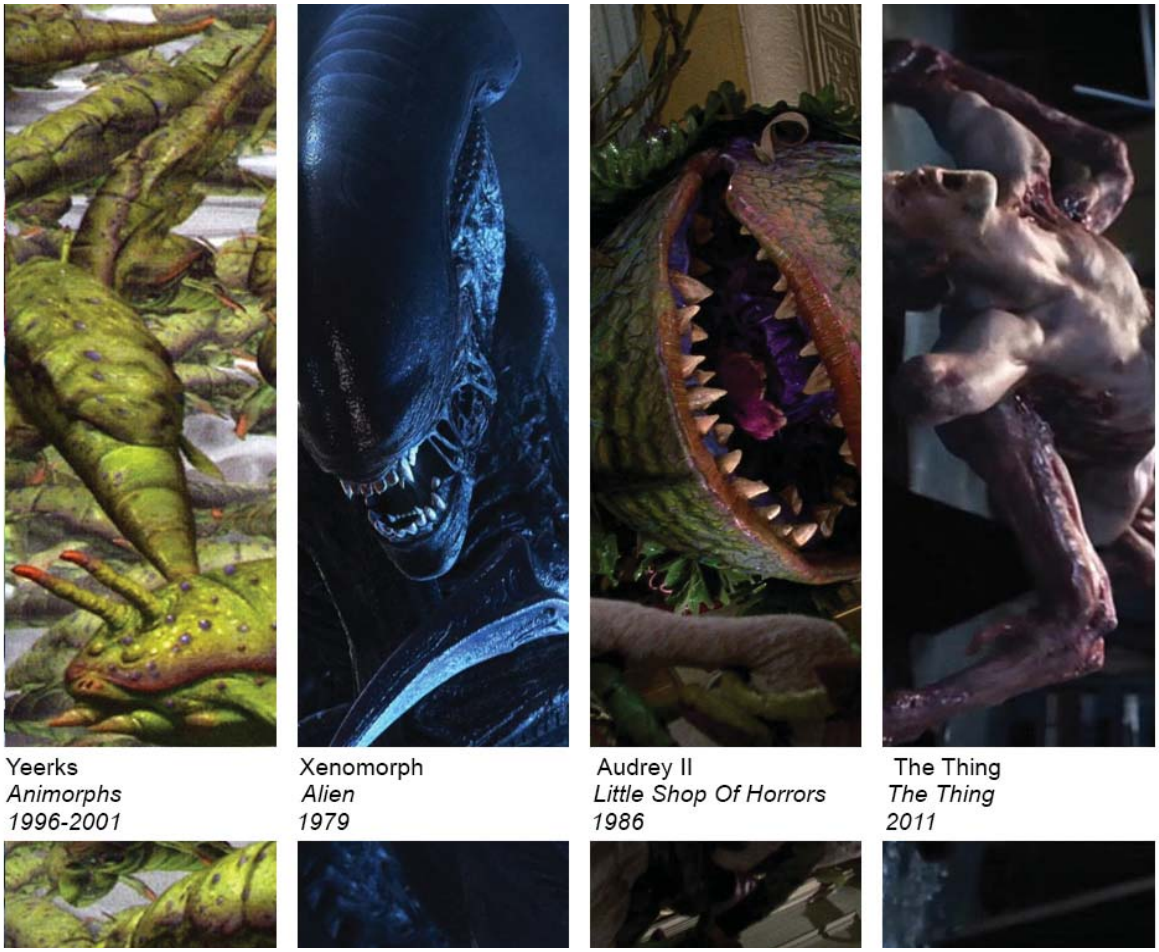

Figure 9. Examples of the unsafe alien. (Sources: 'Animorphs', 1996-2001; 'Alien', 1979; 'Little Shop of Horrors', 1986; 'The Thing', 2011)

This is the alien as a thing of horror, unknown and unknowable, blurring lines between human, beast, machine and plant (see Figure 9). This alien falls between person, horror and animal depending on their role, sentience and mode of interaction. Similarities to human physicality or behaviour mark the unsafe alien as deceptive. When they appear human - as in 'Invasion of the Body Snatchers' (Wanger & Siegel, 1956) or 'The Thing' (Abraham, Newman & van Heijningen, 2011) - they force the audience to consider

the fragility of any reliance upon physicality. Some, like the prawns from 'District 9' (Jackson, Cunningham & Blomkamp, 2009), are designed to be visually unsafe, and then through narrative and characterisation to either deny or confirm the expectations of the audience regarding their in/humanity. The unsafe alien, needless to say, is not neatly gendered. Displays of comprehensible sexuality are used to lure humans, as opposed to being a 'natural' expression of gender - such as an alien in 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' (1997) that pretends to be a human woman in order to lure and kill men. This alien is marked as sexual through its role as a *reproducing* creature, that which creates more of itself ('Slither', Brooks & Gunn, 2006). The roles available to these aliens are predator, enemy, invader, parasite or imposter. They have few avenues for positive relationships. They cannot think, act, speak or love like us - they are that which is unable to engage in positive relationships *because* it is the non-person, that which refuses to be neatly gendered.

3) *The animal alien*, that which is relegated to a lesser animal status through lack of (appropriately human expression of) sentience and gender performance.

Figure 10. Examples of the animal alien. (Sources: 'Dune', 1965; 'Mass Effect', 2007-2012; 'The Mist', 2007)

The non-sentient alien animal (see Figure 10) is rarely a character in their own right - instead, they are an enemy, or populate environments to provide a sense of realism. They do not perform gender or sexuality in ways that resemble humans, but instead are gendered only in reference to reproductive capabilities. Otherwise, the alien animal is an *it*. Typically, they behave in manners reminiscent of Earth animals, will not superficially resemble humans, and cannot engage with the audience/player on any meaningful level beyond pet, resource or enemy.

The overarching pattern is that aliens whose physicality, gender presentation and gender performance align with the appropriate physical and social signifiers of the dominant human gain access to a form of in-text personhood. Female aliens are more constricted by the requirement to perform gender correctly than males, and when marked as female are defined as either a sexual or reproductive object. Gender-nonconforming aliens are typically made incomprehensible, dangerous, animal, or further othered by their mixed, absent or misappropriated gender signifiers. Without appropriate signifiers and performances of gender, aliens tend to have limited positive visibility within relationships. Romantic or sexual relationships in particular require a firm indicator of the genders of all participants if they are to be seen as positive and engaging rather than predatory or animalistic.

2.4 THE FANTASY OF THE OTHER

Science fiction is built upon the fantasy of the other as much as it is upon future technology or space exploration. It becomes about desire to comprehend the alien, to make it available to oneself, to categorize it, to conquer or assimilate, to bond or destroy or take apart, to *know* it (whether in the Biblical sense or otherwise). The allure of the other as a sexed and gendered object is core to science fiction through the exotification and commodification of other peoples and other worlds that has driven both historical colonial invasion and the genre of science fiction.

The 'Mass Effect' series allow the player to pursue a romantic relationship with a number of non-playable characters, making it a useful platform for examining the applications of sexuality and romance in denoting personhood.

Liara (see Figure 8) is a potential romantic partner regardless of the gender of the player character. Her species, the asari, are described as being neither male or female. However, they have human secondary sexual characteristics typically ascribed to women and use "she/her" pronouns, along with other contextual and narrative elements that code them as women. They embody the idealized women in aspects physical, social ("[...] titles like 'huntress' and 'matriarch' [...] asari offspring are usually referred to as 'daughters'", "Asari - Mass Effect Wiki", 2016) and emotional ("[...] favoring compromise and cooperation over conflict", "Asari - Mass Effect Wiki", 2016). In other words, despite Bioware paying lip service to the concept of an alien species that exist outside of the human framework of gender - "male and female have no real meaning for us [...] [I am] not precisely a woman" ("Asari - Mass Effect Wiki", 2016) - what they have in effect created is that safe, commodifiable, consumable fantasy of the other.

Sexuality is core to relationships involving the asari. Framed in-text as "universally attractive" ("Asari - Mass Effect Wiki", 2016), asari are able to reproduce with any other (sentient) species through 'melding' (combining genes in a pseudo-magical manner that appears physically like human intercourse). The usual qualms regarding the alien as a sexual object are negated - asari look, act and engage much like human women, and their mystical sexuality means that even that limitations of cross-species intercourse become void. This is the other who is positioned as innately desirable because she represents the safe and consumable alien - that which is not yourself but which you can obtain.

There is also an allusion to the predatory nature of the unsafe alien in what is otherwise almost *too* human - the 'ardat-yakshi' are asari unable to have sex without killing their partner in an addictive enjoyable manner. Multiple important narratives revolve around the dual nature of the asari as both sexually available lovers and predatory *femme fatales* embodying that alluring combination of sex and death. The alien woman exists in constant flux between a desirable sexually-available otherness and the predatory hedonistic misappropriation of said sexuality. It calls to mind the way in which female sexuality is positioned in media by the dominant as needing to be performed *for* and controlled *by* men as opposed to existing for the enjoyment of women (Wood, 1994, p. 236), lest women become - as the ardat-yakshi do - consumed entirely and uncontrollably by their deadly uninhibited desires.

Figure 11. Mass Effect covers, XBox 360. (Source: 'Mass Effect', 2007; 'Mass Effect 2', 2010; 'Mass Effect 3', 2012)

Even with character customization, the straight, white, able-bodied, cisgender male protagonist is still the default (Low, 2014). The covers of the 'Mass Effect' series (see Figure 11) are quick to show who they expect the audience will both be and play as. Through this gaze, then, consider Liara: she is a woman before she is an alien and therefore needs to be made safely available to that audience (Watts as cited in Reeves, 2010) through her characterisation, voice, narratives and sexuality. Even as games give the player more options to engage in romantic or sexual relationships with the alien other, the insistence is on designing aliens that leave no room for accidental queerness or discomfort around gender. If they are to access romantic or sexual relationships, the other - alien or human - must perform gender, sexuality and relationships in the manner of the dominant.

2.5 THE PREVALENCE OF THE HETERONORMATIVE ALIEN

The representation of LGBT people in media has come a long way, but it is still far from the breadth and scope of visible celebrated heterosexuality. Figure 12 displays a visual analysis of the 'Mass Effect' series regarding potential romance options for each gender of player character, with nonheterosexual options in orange.

Figure 12. Moore, B. (2016). *Potential romance options in the 'Mass Effect' series by game and gender.* (Source: 'Mass Effect', 2007; 'Mass Effect 2', 2010; 'Mass Effect 3', 2012)

Playing as a male protagonist, you can romance either human or alien women before being able to date men, and there is no opportunity to date male-coded aliens at all. It is only in the third game that there is the option to romance a human of the same gender as the player character, and no options exist to romance either aliens or humans who exist outside of conventional systems of gender.

These findings allude to the way in which, despite a surface acknowledgement of queer audiences, the nonheterosexual other is still limited in representation, and the alien other is stymied through adherence to dominant human gender constructs. The drell (see Figure 13) were designed to be a male love interest for heterosexual female audiences, while asari were designed for straight male audiences by "[making] her blue and [giving] her the perfect body" (Watts as cited in Reeves, 2010). Queer audiences are not being designed for, as evidenced by the lack of gay male alien love interests and the safely heteronormative female alien sexuality. These aliens (see Figure 13) are able to be seen as designed to be a sexually viable safe other when contrasted with non-romanceable aliens in the same series (see Figure 14). The latter is unburdened by the constraints of being a sexually viable object but becomes limited instead in characterisation, relationships and narrative.

Figure 13. Physical appearances of the four romanceable sentient alien species in the Mass Effect series. From left to right: male Drell, male Turian, female Quarian, female Asari. (Source: 'Mass Effect', 2007; 'Mass Effect 2', 2010; 'Mass Effect 3', 2012)

The marginalization of the other in media becomes all the more obvious through the manner in which the relationships and roles available *center* their being the other. Roles for women, for instance, which are defined by their being a sexual object, or roles for people of colou being restricted to racial stereotypes .The other is allowed to be present but not to be a fully realised person, instead existing primarily to further the narratives of the dominant. Aliens, viewed as a representation of the human other, are restricted in their engagment with gender and sexuality: it must be heteronormative even when not heterosexual, and it must be recognisably *human* even when all

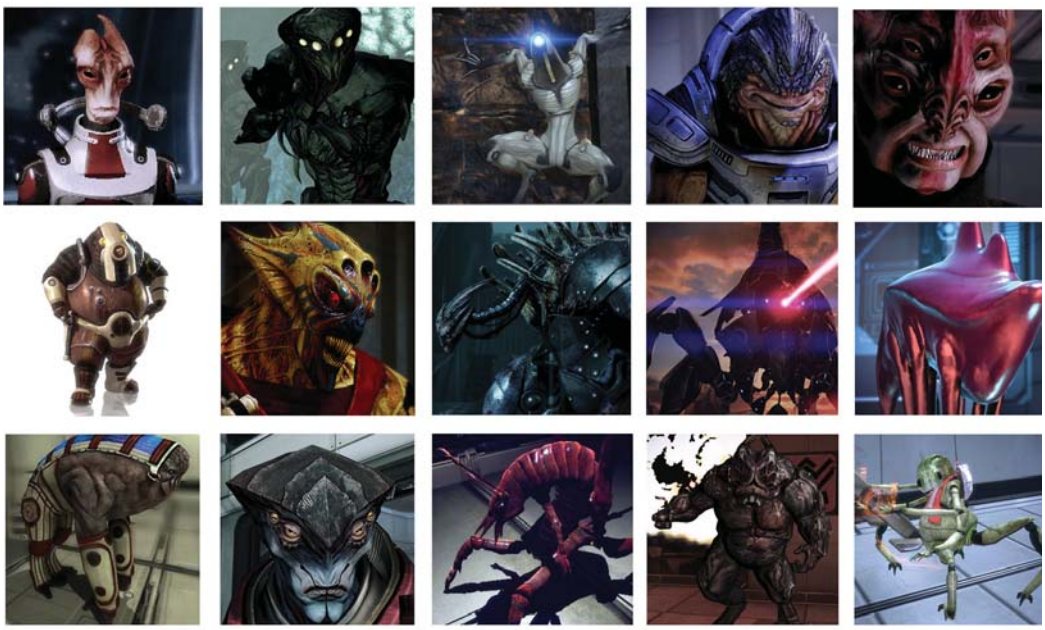

Figure 14. Physical appearances of the non-romanceable sentient aliens in the Mass Effect series. (Source: 'Mass Effect', 2007; 'Mass Effect 2', 2010; 'Mass Effect 3', 2012)

participants are not. Whether human or alien, male and female are defined and reinforced as distinct categories through the grouping of gender-coded characteristics. If aliens are to access positive romantic or sexual relationships in media, this is often the price they pay - a sanitized, safe, heteronormative adherence to gender and sexuality. The visual and contextual analysis of the alien other brings this to the fore through an understanding of how science fiction is made comprehensible by colonial history and the resulting dominant/other paradigm. Analysing relationships that the alien other occupies in science fiction, therefore, allows for an examination of how visible personhood is assigned or denied to the human other, and enables Pilot to address these issues within narrative and characterisation through interactivity and design.

THE PROJECT

3.1 OVERVIEW

Pilot manifests as an interactive intervention; blending game, literature and film. It combines an interactive choice-making mechanic with the necessity for player communication outside of the game space. It requires two players, each of whom is assigned a character. The characters, a human and an alien, are both othered in different intersecting ways within the narrative. Through an exploration of the invasion narrative, the project encourages the formation of relationships with the other via communication and choice-making. It was created by Bo Moore in Photoshop CS6 and Ren'py (an open-source visual novel creator), and features commissioned music by Pengosolvent.

3.2 MECHANICS

There is no right way to play. You cannot 'win' on your choices alone; instead, you are required to work with the other player in order to achieve your goals. There are 24 possible outcomes (see Figure 15), which can be achieved through engagement with both the other *character* in game-space and the other *player* in real-time. In the beginning, the narrative is established alongside a series of weighted choices that dictate whether the player gains the love option in relation to the non-playable love interest, Charlotte. Kahurangi, a human woman (played by the 'human-player' in *Pilot: Kahurangi*), and Shull, a parasitic alien called an isk (played by the 'alien-player' in *Pilot: Shull*), meet in a situation that requires the human to become the alien's host and share a body. Everything from that point onwards takes into account both *friend_points* (earned by making choices that result in positive interactions with the other player) and *love_points* (earned by making choices that result in positive interactions with Charlotte). Figure 15 documents how player choices tie into potential outcomes.

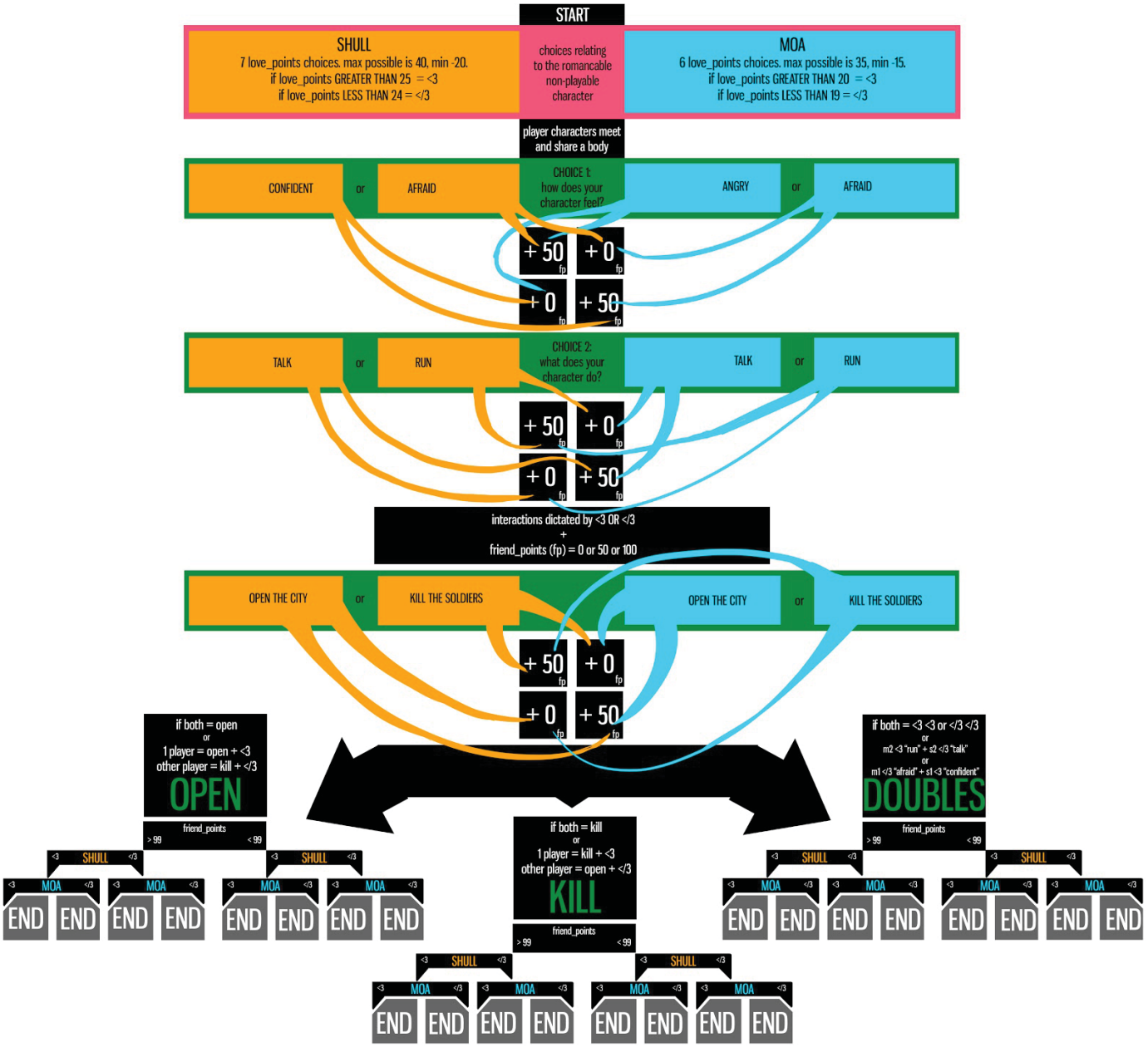

Figure 15. Moore, B. (2016). *The choice tree for Pilot (both players).*

3.3 NARRATIVE

Pilot explores, in two different magnifications and from either character's point of view, the invasion narrative:

Firstly, the background narrative considers the colonization of an alien planet. For humans, this is an act of settling; they are explorers in an unclaimed world. For isk, however, this is an invasion - the taking of land and consumption of resources with no thought paid to the non-human inhabitants.

The second occurrence of the invasion narrative is more intimate - it is the relationship between Shull as parasite and Kahurangi as host. For isk, this is a symbiotic relationship, one that ought benefit both participants - but for humans, being a host is a loss of autonomy to an unknowable alien force, an invasion on a very primal level.

By approaching two interpretations of the invasion narrative from the position of either character, the project aims to create a situation in which neither character is precisely positioned as dominant or other, but are instead an amalgamation of their experiences and situations and individual selves. This contrasts against the conventional protagonist, who is either entirely the dominant or is othered only in a single area, such as gender or race (Lauzen, 2015). At the same time, it aims to acknowledge the ways in which the intersections of these relationships are often messy and ill-defined. That you can be marginalized and still exert power in other areas can be complex and painful to grasp, and it was something delved into through potential character relationships and interactions. Kahurangi is othered in being a queer woman of colour within a society that does not privilege said factors. But as a human, she is position of power over the isk, which are considered animals due to the absence of what humans recognise as appropriate manifestations of personhood. When it comes to sharing a body, however, Shull is in control and Kahurangi becomes deprived of agency in a very immediate manner. The interactive nature of this relationship aims to create balance from imbalance - neither character is innately good or bad, but is instead the outcome of their actions and circumstances. When it comes to the choices the players make together, there are no correct answers, only interactive combinations with positive or negative outcomes.

3.4 CHARACTER DESIGN

The narrative follows Kahurangi and Shull, who are linked through their relationship to Charlotte. Each story is in second person present tense, encouraging the player to immerse themselves. The character-driven narrative focuses foremost on manifestations of love - a single shared point of commiseration that, even if all else is unfamiliar between character and player, can be a starting point for understanding.

Figure 16. Moore, B. (2016). *Screenshot from Pilot of Shull (alien) and Charlotte (human).*

Shull is an isk; a small creature with thin membranous wings and a semi-fluid body (see Figure 16). The ecological niche of the isk is that of a symbiote - they are able to take control of the bodies of other animals, protecting themselves while benefiting the host animal through their additional intelligence and the benefit of two minds working together. In practice, humans consider them to be a parasite.

Physical design, drawing on the research regarding the safe, unsafe and animal aliens, began with one principle: it should not resemble a human (see Figure 17). Settling through testing upon the concept of two players sharing a body - drawing on precedents such as 'Animorphs' (Applegate, 1996-2001) and 'Bloodchild' (Butler, 1995) - this core mechanic needed to make both narrative and interactive sense. This meant an alien that used other animals as hosts.

Figure 17. Moore, B. (2015). *Initial alien sketches.*

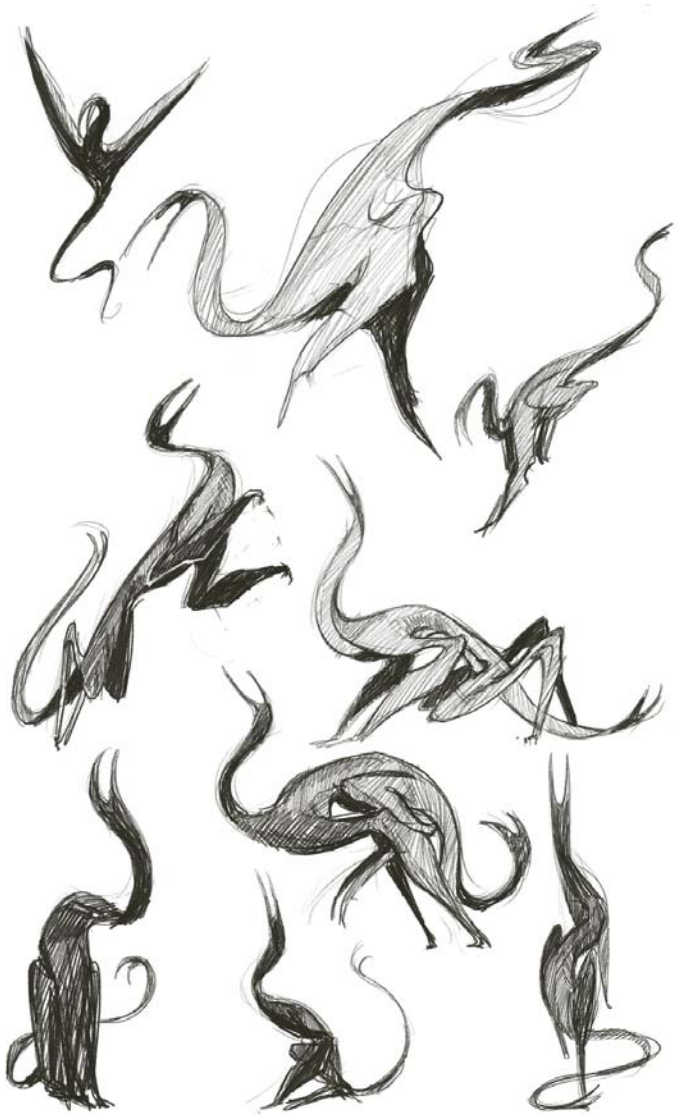

Figure 18. Moore, B. (2015). *Developed alien sketches.*

Shull was designed to certain parameters - small, flexible, able to find and infest a host. Figure 18 documents the early stages of this, with Shull initially having transformative qualities. However, if the alien had that much scope within its own body, it negated the need for a host - so these designs were reworked into the isk as they are now. Figure 19 explores different colours, shapes and physical possibilities. The parasitic nature of the isk are also reflected in the ‘leaf’-like elements that grow on the host after prolonged periods of contact (see Figure 16), which would photosynthesise to draw nutrients from its environment (alongside nutrient absorption from the host) and to signify its presence to other isk.

It is, of course, an alien - an alien that cannot access personhood through gender performance. Kahurangi at first refers to the alien as 'it' or by name. The incongruity of common beliefs around gender is noted through a minor narrative shift that occurs in *Pilot: Kahurangi*, however, if the two characters have a high friendship score: ‘it’ becomes ‘she’.

Figure 19. Moore, B. (2016). *Developed alien exploration.*

When considerations around who is a person are so intertwined with gender performance, not only do we rely upon gender presentation to infer personhood, but when we come to understand some*thing* to be some*one*, we often adhere gendered concepts to them (Wilkie & Bodenhausen as cited in McDougle, 2012). This aims foremost to draw attention to the way in which gender and personhood have become intertwined in our culture, and also to state the essentially queer nature of any alien/human relationship. Potential choice-related discussions with Kahu can also lead to insights on isk culture and Shull's own self, acting as a bonding agent both for the alien-player ("[I] greatly enjoyed seeing [Shull's] character develop [...] [and] to see brief peaks into the Isk's culture," player 4, Appendix B) and the human-player ("I found Shull to be very endearing just from the experience of playing through as [Kahurangi]" player 1, Appendix B).

Figure 20. Moore, B. (2016). *Screenshot of Kahurangi.*

Kahurangi[1] is a gay Maori woman (see Figure 20). She and Charlotte flew the pioneer passenger ship to the new world, but soon after they arrive, Charlotte vanishes without a trace. For ten years since, Kahu has thought her dead. Her relationship with Charlotte is either that of close friends (with unrequited love on Kahurangi's side) or of romantic partners (this factor is dependant on in-game choices).

Kahurangi's character drew upon my own experiences growing up in small-town rural New Zealand as well as a desire to center queer, female and non-white narratives. A Maori protagonist was decided upon to break away from the role of Indigenous characters as being secondary to white protagonists (Mahuta, 2012, p. 127) and to position her as part of a people who have previously been colonized by an invasive settler force. She is a protagonist alongside Shull in the story, relatable through characterisation and the interactive elements; one human-player discussed this manifesting as "[Kahurangi's] love, her dedication, her strength, they all appealed to me and made me admire her" (player 6, Appendix B).

1. Kahurangi is referred to as 'Mila' in Appendix A & D, and 'Moa' in Appendix B & C.

Figure 21. Moore, B. (2016). *Outfit variations.*

It was important that she not be designed as a sexual object, particularly given the narrative's romantic focus. In regards to outfits, she was to be practical rather than unnecessarily sexual (see Figures 21, 24 & 25), as suited her character and job. In the same vein, she was to be a fat woman (see Figure 22), because it is rare to see fat women existing in an unapologetic and non-comedic manner within media, particularly game design, despite many women in real life being overweight (Ingraham, 2015).

Overall, Kahu was to be seen foremost as a person rather than being identified immediately as the other through the limitations of her narrative, characterisation or relationships. In future works, a wider scope of characters would allow me to explore more characters, personalities and roles. This project was limited in this regard due to time restraints; narrative chunks that introduced a variety of secondary characters had to be cut during the illustration stage because the increased workload (an estimated 300 images, opposed to the current 224) would have threatened the project's ability to be completed to a high standard within the time frame.

Figure 22. Moore, B. (2016). *Initial sketches exploring body type.*

Figure 23. Moore, B. (2016). *Exploring hairstyles and types.*

Figure 24. Moore, B. (2016). *Considering using sprites. This jacket unfortunately did not work with the narrative and would have been too time-consuming to draw many times.*

Figure 25. Moore, B. (2016). *Possible spacesuit designs for a previous iteration of the narrative.*

Figure 26. Moore, B. (2016). *Expressions.*

Figure 27. Moore, B. (2016). *Experimenting a more cartoony style.*

Figure 28. Moore, B. (2016). *Screenshot of Charlotte.*

Charlotte (see Figure 28) links the two playable characters through her role as the love interest. She disappeared due to Shull, who decided to seize a human host in order to try stop humans from continuing to terraform the environment. When Shull takes Charlotte as a host, however, their relationship becomes either based in mutual goals or a close friendship with romantic elements (based on in-game choices).

Charlotte's design began (see Figure 29) with a desire to move away from the typical representations of women as love interests. The prevalence of female love interests in games being white able-bodied young women reinforces the message that in order to access romantic or sexual relationships, you have to be a certain kind of person (Low, 2014). The effects of being a host to Shull over time impacted her design (see Figure 30) in a variety of ways, along with considerations of the outcomes of space travel such as osteopenia (see Figure 31) resulting in the use of physical aids.

Figure 29. Moore, B. (2016). *Exploring visual design resulted in deciding to have Charlotte be Chinese-American*

Figure 30. Moore, B. (2016). *Examining how being a host could physically affect Charlotte.*

Figure 31. Moore, B. (2016). *Mobility aids and outfit variations.*

3.5 ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

Within the invasion narrative, there are the invaders, the invaded, and the land that becomes the living site of contention. Pilot aimed to create a world that was appealing to the human settlers through natural resources. Water, therefore, was to be plentiful in this alien world, in order to give the human settlers motivation to settle, alongside breathable air and consumable resources. It was also to be core to the isk, animal life, and the functionality of the natural environment.

Figure 32. Moore, B. (2015). *Studying water movement and a lush green environment.*

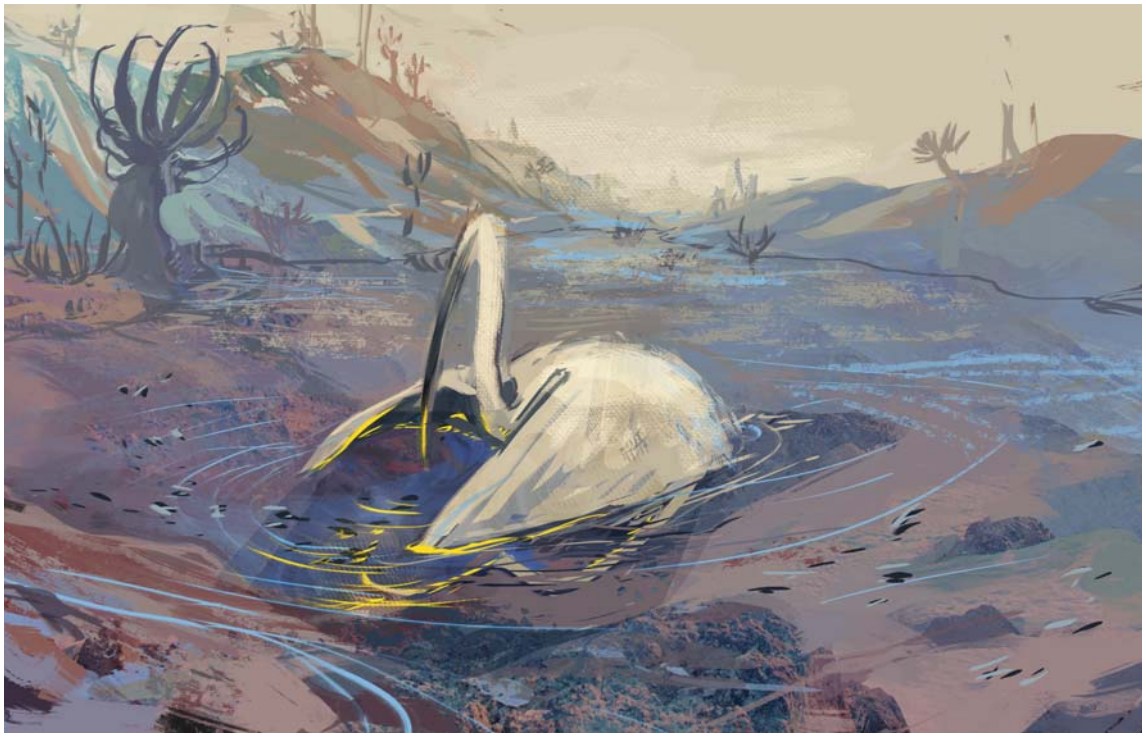

Figure 33. Moore, B. (2016). *Considering how animals would adapt to a mostly-waterbound existence. This creature 'cups' its body over the water and uses a light at the tip of its tail to attract prey, which it then spears with its sharp beak.*

Figure 34. Moore, B. (2015). *Underwater environment.*

Figure 35. Moore, B. (2016). *A small mobile animal that lives in tree branches. Many of these designs were not used in the final work due to limitations on size and scope of the project.*

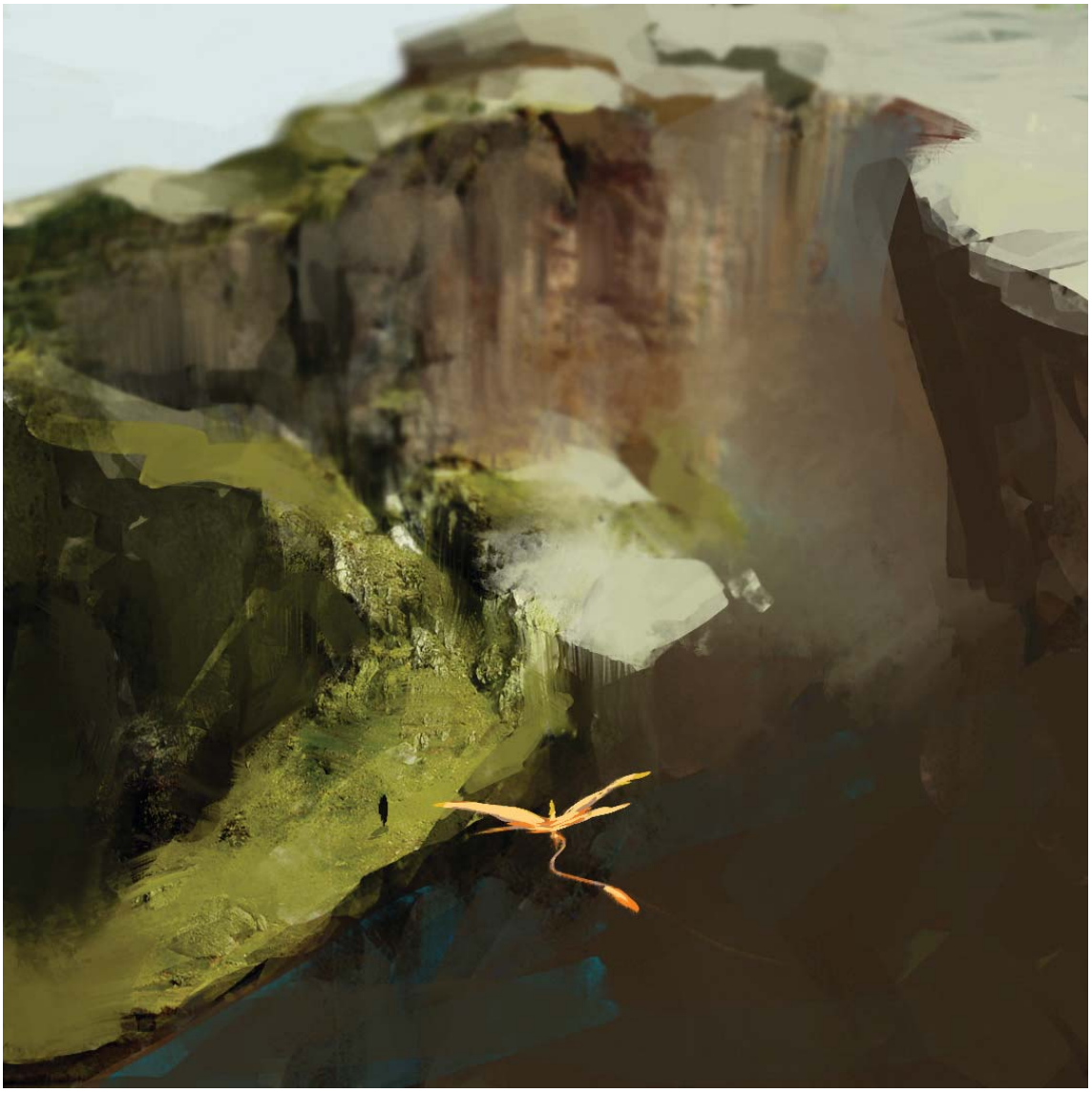

Figure 36. Moore, B. (2016). *Imagining a more typical 3D gameplay while considering how Pilot could manifest as a game pitch.*

Figure 37. Moore, B. (2016). *An early imagining of an Earth under attack, drawing on rural New Zealand.*

Figure 38. Moore, B. (2016). *An early design for a predatory animal.*

Figure 39. Moore, B. (2016). *Putting the size of the giant plant life into scope.*

3.6 TESTING

The earliest model of this narrative was a text-based roleplaying game (see Appendix D). Two anonymous volunteers were assigned the roles of parasitic alien and human, and I was the equivalent of the game-master. Players communicated and made choices over a Google Docs sheet while I dictated outcomes and provided additional information. They then filled out of a short questionnaire (see Appendix A). This aimed to examine how much control and interactivity each player needed in order to feel that they were impacting the narrative as two players sharing one in-game body.

It became apparent the impact of player input was unbalanced due to the alien having primary control over the host body. One human-player felt “the alien had a lot more influence since it was actually a human player who understands how humans work and what they need [and] they could formulate plans and execute them without my input” (player 4, Appendix A). Meanwhile, the unlimited in-game interactivity limited the potential visual scope of the project, so interactive possibilities were pared down to a few core choices in future models. These initial tests emphasised the importance of communication and choices - “coming up with creative ways [to communicate]” (player 4, Appendix A) and “[having] options [...] to help each other out or to try to plan our own goals” (player 1, Appendix A) were both noted as encouraging engagement. Narrative and mechanic could also feed into each other to create a more immersive experience: “I felt powerless because I could only rely on the alien's compassion/caring about me. If they decided to ignore me, there's nothing I could do. But that's honestly awesome, the mechanics reflect the story” (player 4, Appendix A).

3.7 FINDINGS

Once settling upon the visual novel format, playtesting an early iteration of this project discovered that leading questions skewed answers. The choice “Can you trust (the other character)?”, with answers being “Yes” or “No”, led to eight out of nine players choosing “Yes” (see Appendix B). This question had essentially became *positive versus negative* instead of *option versus option*. When that choice was replaced with one that asked for an emotional response from the players regarding *themselves* as opposed to the other player (“You feel...”), player choices were more varied (see Appendix C).

Figure 40 shows data from the most recent user testing (see Appendix C). It suggests participants became more likely to ask for the other player's input as time went on. The answers for the first two questions were quite equally balanced, but the third choice was very skewed; this was also the choice people were most likely to consult each other regarding. Combined with the outcome for most players being a 'Friend' relationship (see Figure 41), the positive in-text relationship developing between the characters may have encouraged players to communicate and discuss their choices. In future, a less leading third choice would seeing whether players consulted more because of question content or increased in-text positive interactions.

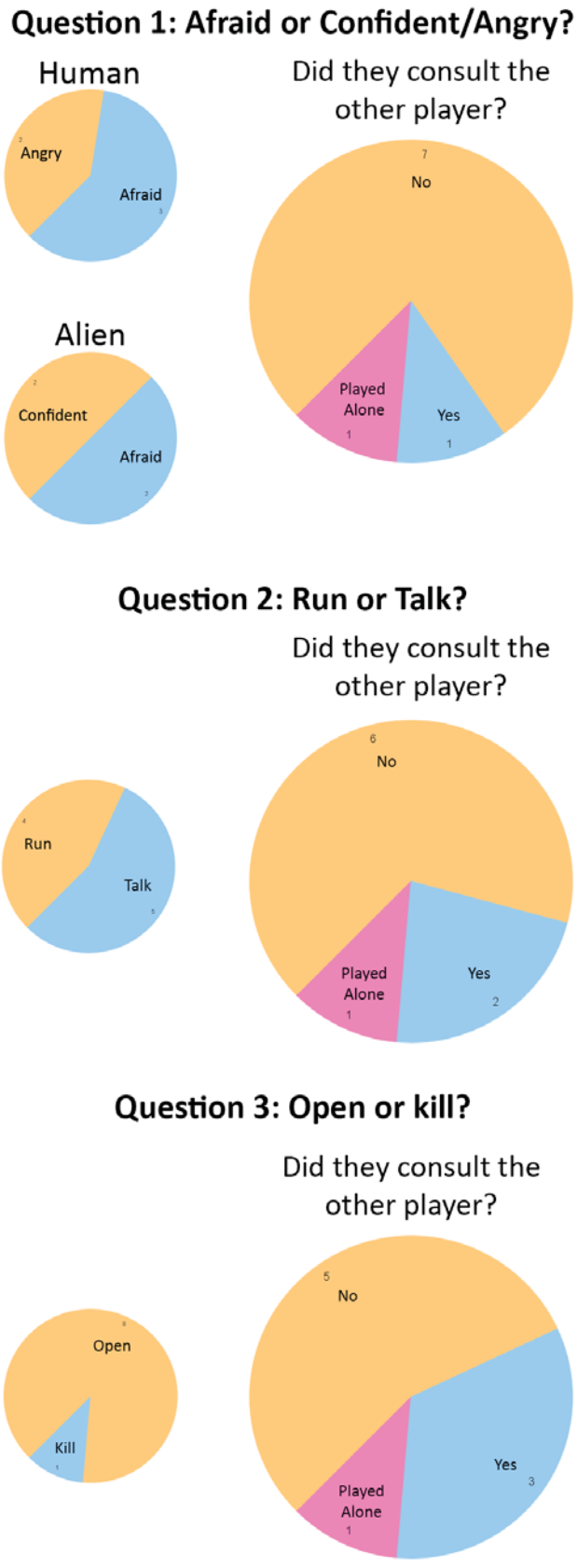

Figure 40. Moore, B. (2016). *Results of choices and interactions.* (Source: Appendix C)

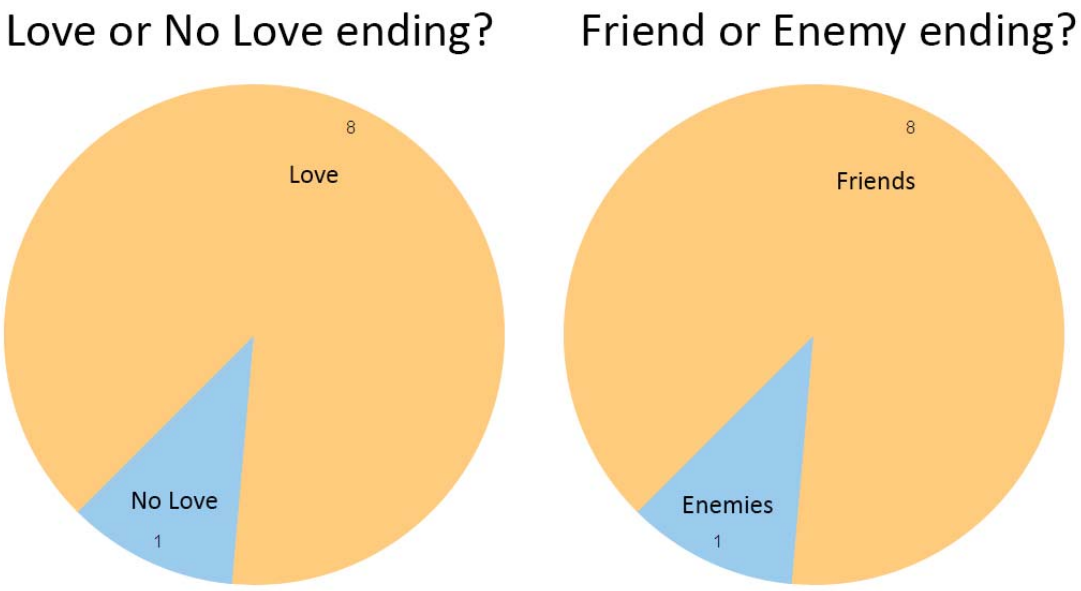

Figure 41. Moore, B. (2016). *Love/No Love + Friend/Enemy results.* (Source: Appendix C)

One player, who partnered with a friend in the same location, noted how "[their] choices in the game and the relationship between the characters could quite easily end up echoing the relationship between [them] as players" (player 2, Appendix C). Interestingly, people did tend to choose choices that gave them positive relationships with their partner, despite a 50/50 chance of a negative choice combination if players did not consult (and most did not). People were more likely to discuss choices with the other player if a) there was a pre-existing relationship and/or b) they communicated with each other via voice as opposed to text. Feedback was overall positive regarding how players felt regarding both Shull and Kahurangi, from alien- and human-players, almost entirely regardless of the Friend or Enemy outcome (see Appendices B & C). This may suggest that the focus on enabling players to impact the development of characterisation and relationships, regardless of whether positive or negative, encouraged engagement and empathy - "Shull's panic and grief at the end- when Charlotte was believed to be dead- was very real and raw, and I was on the edge of my seat" (player 4, Appendix B). *Pilot* is a short functional example of a mechanic that could be expanded upon in future works, encapsulated within a narrative structure that bolsters this model of interactivity through character relationships. Future iterations would involve a greater emphasis on complex narrative choice trees, more choices, a wider tester base and more effective audio inclusion. This mechanic could also be transposed into other forms of gameplay, streamlined through an in-game method of communication, and expanded upon through an automated randomized method of partner selection.

3.8 CONCLUSION

At the center of *Pilot* is an examination of how science fiction is made comprehensible through our history of colonialism and the resulting dominant/other binary. The alien is that which is oppositional to the (dominant) human, reminding us of what we are through what it is not, and has come to represent the human other as well as the non-human other. Media representations of the human other often exist to benefit the dominant - so to be visible as a person, to access complex roles and relationships, the alien other often must adhere to dominant ideas around gender, sexuality, race and physicality. Through visual and precedent analysis, the work examines how the visibility of complex relationships involving the other can encourage audiences to become aware of the other as a person.

Pilot is not *about* being the alien, a woman or a queer person - it is about bringing these elements within narrative to position those who are the other as people through the formation of player-impacted relationships. It aims to subvert the way women, particularly women of colour, are often represented solely as sexual objects or conquests. The alien, conversely, has a deliberately non-human physicality that does not enable it to be gendered, in order to address the manner in which 'normative' physicality and behaviour have become correlated in dominant discourse with personhood and moral alignment. Queer characters have central rather than minor or stereotypical roles; that they are not heterosexual is evident but not exotified. These elements are interwoven through the character-driven narrative in a manner that allows players to engage with the work in a variety of ways, even when elements of the identities or experiences within may be unfamiliar to them personally. Both players have control over how the narrative and relationships develop, through both in-game choices and real-world interactions. This mechanic encourages an understanding that the other does not become a person when the dominant (or the other player) agrees to recognise it as such - it was always a person, it will remain a person. The aim is that, whether the characters have negative or positive interactions, the fact that a complex nuanced relationship *of any kind* has developed due to player choices is an avenue for greater understanding of the other (other player, other character, other *other*). Testing showed that players did seem to gain an appreciation and empathy for characters through having an interactive hand in the development of relationships, and were driven to learn more about characters and narrative paths through replaying (see Appendices B & C). *Pilot* moves to encourage players towards understanding there are many valid ways to be a person, in physicality, behaviour and interaction. Science fiction, after all, is about drawing new meanings from old narratives, and there is no better way to do put this into practice than challenging fundamental underlying beliefs about who gets to be recognised as a person.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

A short definition of terms, contextualized within their specific usages in this body of work.

Alien

A fictional extraterrestrial non-human within science fiction.

Colonialism

The practice of assuming control over Indigenous lands, resources, people and/or animals, in order to extract value from them as commodities or to settle upon the land. Often achieved through greater technological- or man-power and reinforced through ideological, social and military means (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5-6). Framed in this context through its relationship with science fiction (Diaz, 2014).

Dominant

Those who are the dominant in this context are those who benefit from the current social and cultural system due to being positioned as natural and normal regarding factors such as race, gender, sexuality, etc.

Heteronormativity

The assumption that heterosexuality and the binary male/female gender system is the default.

Other

Those who are defined by not being of the dominant and are not privileged within the current system regarding one (or more) factor of their identity or self.

Pakeha

Person living in New Zealand who is of white European origin.

Personhood

Oft-contested and having various legal, spiritual and moral definitions, personhood is here examined as the state of being a person and the conditions and qualities that this encompasses.

Science fiction

Genre of media discussing imagined and/or future potential for aliens, other planets, space travel, global environmental changes, enhanced technology or artificial intelligence (Diaz, 2015).

Queer

Catch-all term used here to refer to people under the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) umbrella; people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender.

APPENDIX - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Appendix A:

Do you consent to be quoted in my thesis?
What role did you play in this game?
Did you feel that you were able to impact what happened in the game? In what ways did/didn't this manifest?
What was the least enjoyable element for you, and why?
What was the most enjoyable element for you, and why?
What changes in the mechanics of the game do you feel would most have improved your experience?
Do you feel the other player had an unfair advantage over you, or you over them?
How did you feel about the other player by the end of the session?
If at all, in what ways did how you felt about the other player impact your actions?
In a video game, how would another player having the ability to communicate freely with you via text make you feel about playing the game?

Appendix B:

Do you consent to be quoted in my thesis?
What role did you play?
Were the choices you made impacted by the other player's input?
What was the least enjoyable element for you?
What was the most enjoyable element for you?
How did you feel about the other player by the end of the session?
1st choice answer?
Did you consult before making the FIRST choice?
2nd choice answer?
Did you consult before making the SECOND choice?
3rd choice answer?
Did you consult before making the THIRD choice?
Your relationship to the other player was...
FRIEND or ENEMY ending?
LOVE or NO LOVE ending?
How did you communicate with the other player?
By the end of the game, what did you feel regarding the character you played as?
By the end of the game, what did you feel regarding the other player's character?
How old are you, roughly?

Appendix C:

Do you consent to be quoted in my thesis?
How old are you, roughly?
What role did you play?
How did you communicate with the other player?
Your relationship to the other player was...
IF HUMAN: 1st choice answer?
IF ALIEN: 1st choice answer?
Did you consult before making the FIRST choice?
2nd choice answer?
Did you consult before making the SECOND choice?
3rd choice answer?
Did you consult before making the THIRD choice?
LOVE or NO LOVE ending?
FRIEND or ENEMY ending?
Were the choices you made impacted by the other player's input?
By the end of the game, what did you feel regarding the character you played as?
By the end of the game, what did you feel regarding the other player's character?
What was the most enjoyable element for you?
What was the least enjoyable element for you?
How did you feel about the other player by the end of the session?

APPENDIX A

Feedback from participants in the first roleplay-style test of the narrative and interactive model (see Appendix D). Participants volunteered and were paired with a second anonymous person. After a short play (20-30 minutes), they completed this questionnaire.

Do you consent to be quoted in my thesis?	What role did you play in this game?	Did you feel that you were able to impact what happened in the game? In what ways did/didn't this manifest?	What was the least enjoyable element for you, and why?	What was the most enjoyable element for you, and why?
Yes	Human Host	yes, i felt like my impact was to help steer the two of us to our goal, since my role was more internal	the beginning was a lot of setup and since i had extra text on the side, it took me a minute to catch up.	i liked the options we had as players, whether to help each other out or to try to plan our own goals.
Yes	Alien	Yes, I felt like I had just the right amount of agency.	I was often unsure how much I should communicate--whether or not it was acceptable to explain my thought process, for example.	The descriptions of the world were vivid and interesting, and I found I wanted to work with my partner to discover more about it.
Yes	Alien	Yeah! i mean, as the alien thats like my whole...role. it was cool! it was a cool way to do rpgs	the google form delay was....unfortunate, but other than that it worked really well!	trying to convey information through action was a fun puzzle! that was really cool
Yes	Human Host	definitely somewhat. i had knowledge the alien did not, and i could understand human speech. but i feel like the alien had a lot more influence. since it was actually a human player who understands how humans work and what they need, they could formulate plans and execute them without my input a lot of the time	probably what i said up there about the alien being able to do so much. they probably could have done 80% of the gameplay without me there at all.	getting into the role, and talking directly to the alien. coming up with creative ways to have it respond to me since it couldnt talk.

What changes in the mechanics of the game do you feel would most have improved your experience?	Do you feel the other player had an unfair advantage over you, or you over them?	How did you feel about the other player by the end of the session?	If at all, in what ways did how you felt about the other player impact your actions?	In a video game, how would another player having the ability to communicate freely with you via text make you feel about playing the game?
the game felt a little slow-paced since it was relying on 3 separate people typing in order to progress. i don't know if this could be worked on at all but if the game is oriented towards text-based game players then i don't think they will mind as much.	no, i think the balance of physical movement versus perception and speech was a good system	i feel like we were on the same page. we seemed to be willing to cooperate and the game went smoothly.	i was willing to cooperate and give the information i had because the other player felt the same.	i would like it! i think there's a cool level of one-sided cooperation that could go on there. there's obviously a chance that people could be trolls or cruel to the player, but i think a game with genuine players would be really enjoyable.
	I worried that they might be frustrated by their lack of agency, but I didn't really feel like either of us had the advantage, since I was mostly cooperating with their thoughts.	I felt sort of as though they were my pet--I was fond of them and considered them a good companion, even if I was frustrated with them once or twice.	I felt guilty when I compromised our shared body. I sort of wanted to protect them.	Intrigued. I really enjoy video games that play with communication in this way.
mmmmm. perhaps a clearer understanding of your goal and your species function? idk	not really	pretty cooperative! fun stuff	well they seemed pretty nice so i went along with them for the most part	its a weird concept but i like it!
giving the human a lot more knowledge about the area. possibly give the human specific details about how stats like hunger and exhaustion work, so the human will need to explain the limitations of their body. give the alien motivation to stick around in the human, so there is a real conflict between the win states for the two players.	sorta, but that's how it SHOULD feel to be posessed by an alien that controls your body. i felt powerless because i could only rely on the alien's compassion/caring about me. if they decided to ignore me, theres nothing i could do. but thats honestly awesome, the mechanics reflect the story.	i felt really close to them... the fact that they were caring for my body and responsive to all my commands made me feel like they were kind.	it made me able to be open about the fact that them possessing me was a big negative in my life. i felt like there was potential they would care for me and help me out, because i percieved them as kind.	i dont think i feel any particular way about it. the concept is too general for me to say.

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire responses for the first test of the visual novel format.

Do you consent to be quoted in my thesis?	What role did you play?	Were the choices you made impacted by the other player's input?	What was the least enjoyable element for you?	What was the most enjoyable element for you?	How did you feel about the other player by the end of the session?	1st choice answer ?	Did you consult before making the FIRST choice?
Yes	Moa (Human)	No, because we didn't really discuss our choices before making them. I personally wasn't sure whether or not I should be telling the other player what I was thinking.	I didn't recognize that the bolded words took me to other passages at first, and missed out on some stuff unfortunately. I think I just didn't pick up on it at first and it made me feel like I missed something big.	The really cool symbiotic relationship between Moa and Shull, definitely. I guess I find anything regarding multiple beings in one body fascinating.	I don't know, because I'm not sure what choices they made! I think if our choices were wildly different I might dislike them a little.	Talk	No
Yes	Shull (Alien)	No. It seemed to me that the point was not to know, as that would be "metagaming" the storyline (getting information the characters don't know).	The music was very loud, especially the chasing music.	The anticipation of seeing what the other player's choice led me to.	We were friendly before and after, but no big changes due to being strangers. I am glad they chose amicable options in the game, I wouldn't have liked a betrayal style of story (if it is one) my first time through.	Talk	No
Yes	Shull (Alien)	We agreed unanimously on what choices to make. I would have probably taken the same path had my friend not been there, and vice versa.	The music can be a little jarring in certain scenes, such as immediately after Charlotte's death when Moa and Shull are standing in the steaming wreckage. Partner disliked how frequently the music was played, in general, and complained of repetition. He suggested that music only be played during key dialogues to help set mood.	The story and writing were fantastic. You have a gift for describing things, the dialogue is life-like, and the art is absolutely wonderful.	We have known each other for years, so my feelings towards them haven't really been impacted any. It was something to do.	Talk	Yes
Yes	Shull (Alien)	No, we made our choices independently, only telling each other what colour we chose. This was mainly, I believe, because we had not spoken prior to playing this game, and our schedules differed. To be quite honest, though, I don't know that I would have done it differently even if I knew my co-player and had the opportunity to discuss things with them	Admittedly, my memory is not the greatest, and especially as I was making my own notes about my feelings and reactions as I played through, I would often forget the colour of the choice I made, and wind up saving and restarting, rapidly skipping through dialog to return to the choice I had just made to check the colour. Some record of the coloured choices made during the current playthrough would definitely have alleviated this.	Definitely a tie between the art and the narrative. As a player, you learn about the world in a natural way, and aren't inundated with lore right out of the gate. And this is where the "tie" comes in, because it's done just as effectively through the narrative as it is through the design. You learn through the character's memories in flashbacks, instead of being outright told by an unrelated narrator, which makes things flow very nicely. The use of font to imply the alien-ness of Shull, the subtle details in the way voice and text are percieved by each characters, the "parasite" visual on hosts, and a number of other elements all help create a very enjoyable playthrough experience.	My co player was quite nice! Responded quickly, accommodated odd schedule, etc.	Talk	No
Yes	Moa (Human)	No, we made the choices independently and then told each other what we chose.	I didn't like having to communicate with a stranger but that's because I'm awkward, and I chose to be randomly assigned a partner so that's not a game fault. I'm sure I would not have minded playing with a friend or playing with a stranger without having to actually talk to them (like if we were connected through the game instead of having to manually input the other person's choice? I hope you know what I mean)	I really enjoyed learning about the characters and their stories.	I was randomly assigned a partner and we only spoke about the game and a little polite small talk so I had no real feelings about them one way or another.	Talk	No
Yes	Moa (Human)	We asked each other what we put, however gave little to no input on the others' choice.	There was little that I did not enjoy about this game, but I would say the least enjoyable part would be the difficulty in syncing games as one would be more fast paced or slow paced than the other at different times.	The most enjoyable element for me was dialogue between Shull, Moa, and Charlotte, especially the parts between Shull and Moa as I could relate to the cofronting of entities being a multiple system myself.	I felt like our characters as well as the choices we made together, I was able to feel more loving towards my partner at the end. This game induced feelings of love for me.	Run	No
Yes	Moa (Human)	Yes, mostly due to the fact that the other player reads quite a bit faster than I do. I am dyslexic, and while I really loved the story I felt a bit pressured to make choices based on what my partner chose. Also I was quite confused at the multiple colours (four) that your partner could choose from when there was only two choices for you as the player.	The reading-- this isn't a fault of you as a creator, I am just a very slow reader. It would be amazing to see with voice acting.	The artwork was amazing, I just... It was beyond what I expected, and that's saying something. I always expect the best from you, and this has exceeded even those expectations. The amount of work you put in is intense.	Annoyed because he blazed through it so fast. He was finished with the game before I even hit the first question.	Run	They chose before I could-- and didn't consult until after.
Yes	Shull (Alien)		The graphics were a bit slow. (Or maybe it's just the computer o.o)	The plotline. I wished I knew what would happen next. ((and the gay omfg))	Apparently, they chose a different color for the third choice. And ended up having the LOVE and ENEMY ending. I feel bad that they didn't see the FRIEND ending	Talk	Yes

2nd choice answer?	Did you consult before making the SECOND choice?	3rd choice answer?	Did you consult before making the THIRD choice?	Your relationship to the other player was...	FRIEND or ENEMY ending?	LOVE or NO LOVE ending?	How did you communicate with the other player?	By the end of the game, what did you feel regarding the character you played as?	By the end of the game, what did you feel regarding the other player's character?	How old are you, roughly?
Yes (Trust)	No	Open the city	No	I did not know them at all.	FRIEND ending	NO LOVE ending	Text	I felt very positive about my character. I definitely felt connected to Moa by the end in many ways.	I LOVE SHULL. Okay now that that's out of the way. I found Shull to be very endearing just from the experience of playing through as Moa. To be honest I was more interested in playing as Shull because I love aliens, but I chose Moa out of curiosity. And I'm glad I did, because seeing their relationship through human eyes is really interesting.	21-25
Yes (Trust)	No	Open the city	No	I did not know them at all.	FRIEND ending	NO LOVE ending	Text	It feels lonely separated from its kind. It's willing to make a great leap of faith to trust another species that does not deserve it based on one individual.	She's trusting and loving enough to accept what she thought was a parasite, because it says it's friends with someone she loves, without any confirmation.	21-25
Yes (Trust)	Yes	Kill the soldiers	Yes	I knew them well.	FRIEND ending	LOVE ending	Voice (Skype or phone call, etc)	I like Shull a lot, and I appreciate how much world-building went into their side of the story. I'd like to hear more about this character and their species in the future.	Moa is alright, though I don't have strong feelings towards her. admittedly it was a little hard to concentrate while in a voice call with someone else, so that may have impacted it.	18-20
Yes (Trust)	No	Open the city	No	I did not know them at all.	FRIEND ending	LOVE ending	Text	I played as Shull, and greatly enjoyed seeing their character develop. The flashback with Charlotte and their debate about how to handle humans, about interactions with them, past and future, and seeing how Shull's feelings for Charlotte developed, from a host to a friend. It was also very interesting to see brief peaks into the Isk's culture- that is was frowned upon for Shull to have kept Charlotte as a host for so long, since they did not believe she was willing. Shull's panic and grief at the end- when Charlotte was believed to be dead- was very real and raw, and I was on the edge of my seat. It was handled very well.	I liked Moa. She reacted realistically to being used as a host, and tried to fight it initially, but she wasn't obstinate or unreasonably difficult. I appreciated her willingness to hear Shull out. Moa and Shull's mutual care for Charlotte also proved to be quite interesting, especially as a motivator to cooperate. Their desire to find and return to her when Shull goes to find Moa, their excitement- both of them bubbling over with happiness and trying to get their words in over each other despite occupying the same body- and their shared grief when they think she's died, all made for a very interesting dynamic between the two.	18-20
Yes (Trust)	No	Kill the soldiers	No	I did not know them at all.	FRIEND ending	LOVE ending	Text	I felt good, no complaints.	Good, I chose the options that led to the LOVE and FRIEND endings and I was glad to have gotten them, it made me feel warm and fuzzy. Good alien.	21-25
No (Distrust)	No	Open the city	Yes	I knew them well.	ENEMY ending	LOVE ending	They were in the same room as me	My heart yearned to understand the character I was playing as Moa. Her love, her dedication, her strength, they all appealed to me and made me admire her. All these are aspects I do not see within myself, but seeing it from Moa's point of view made me feel happy somehow.	Despite being touched by Moa's love, I felt most in touch with Shull. Being a multiple system myself and not seeing myself as human, I felt like I understood Shull the most.	Under 18
Yes (Trust)	Yes	Kill the soldiers	Yes	I knew them well.	ENEMY ending	LOVE ending	They were in the same room as me	I liked her - But mostly I liked Shull, and I didn't play Shull.	I love aliens <3 I loved Shull, I found Moa mostly a very interesting platform to learn about Shull as a character. I find their race intriguing, and I would want to learn more about the world-- possibly in cohabitation with humans -- and the animals/creatures/aliens that inhabit it.	26-30
Yes (Trust)	Yes	Open the city	Yes	I knew them in passing.	FRIEND ending	LOVE ending	Text	Shull was treated as a parasite	She opened up to (me) shull	18-20

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire responses for the second test of the visual novel format.

Do you consent to being quoted?	How old are you, roughly?	What role did you play?	How did you communicate?	Your relationship to the other player was...	IF HUMAN: 1st choice answer?	IF ALIEN: 1st choice answer?	Did you consult before making the FIRST choice?	2nd choice answer?	Did you consult before making the SECOND choice?	3rd choice answer?	Did you consult before making the THIRD choice?	LOVE or NO LOVE ending?
Yes	21-25	Moa (Human)	I played alone	I played alone	Angry	I played as the human.	I played alone	Run	I played alone	Open the city	I played alone	LOVE ending
Yes	21-25	Shull (Alien)	They were in the same room as me	I knew them well.	I played as the alien.	Confident	No	Talk	No	Kill the soldiers	No	LOVE ending
Yes	21-25	Moa (Human)	They were in the same room as me	I knew them well.	Afraid	I played as the human.	No	Talk	No	Open the city	No	LOVE ending
Yes	18-20	Shull (Alien)	Text	I knew them well.	I played as the alien.	Confident	No	Run	Yes	Open the city	Yes	LOVE ending
Yes	18-20	Moa (Human)	Text	I knew them well.	Afraid	I played as the human.	Yes	Run	Yes	Open the city	Yes	LOVE ending
Yes	36-40	Moa (Human)	They were in the same room as me	I knew them well.	Angry	I played as the human.	No	Talk	No	Open the city	No	NO LOVE ending
Yes	18-20	Shull (Alien)	Text	I knew them well.	I played as the alien.	Afraid	No	Talk	No	Open the city	No	LOVE ending
Yes	21-25	Moa (Human)	Text	I knew them well.	Afraid	I played as the human.	No	Talk	No	Open the city	No	LOVE ending

FRIEND or ENEMY ending?	Were the choices you made impacted by the other player's input in any way?	By the end of the game, what did you feel regarding the character you played as?	By the end of the game, what did you feel regarding the other player's character?	What was the most enjoyable element for you, and why?	What was the least enjoyable element for you, and why?	How did you feel about the other player by the end of the session?
ENEMY ending	I played alone	Very sad, I had hoped things might have ended happily. I really loved Moa.	Conflicted. I really liked Shull but their choices made me upset.	The story. I really loved the story and the world.		I played alone
FRIEND ending	I don't think so. We just communicated colour and nothing else.	Hopeful.	Hopeful.	The fact our choices in the game and the relationship between the characters could quite easily end up echoing the relationship between us as players. We have quite similar thoughts and so our version of the game would likely be a cooperative one - even without us communicating.	I worried I had missed the 'interactive' element of the colours until they came up	Nothing new.
FRIEND ending	No, we didn't discuss choices beforehand as I assumed there might be some level of secrecy to them.					
FRIEND ending	My other player was in agreement with me for all of the choices, so I suppose I felt like my decisions were being affirmed.	I like them a lot.	I was wary of them at first but began to trust them when it was obvious they still cared about Charlotte.	Making choices in collaboration with another person.	I can't think of one.	They're good.
FRIEND ending	A little. If I was teetering on the edge of a choice I consulted them for what they wanted to do.	Moa is a great character. I wish I knew more of her relationship with Charlotte.	Shull was cute, and I want to know more about her.	Reading the story elements, because it is an interesting concept for a world and plot.	If anything the controls, it's minor but if I could use arrow keys and clicking for advancing the text that would be nice.	The same, we agreed on most of the choices.
FRIEND ending	no- I tended not to communicate with them - they read a lot more slowly.	I felt that Moa had become an ally of Shull... she would be friends with Shull if shull was authentic - when Shull spoke as Charlotte, Moa didn't like it.	I sort of trusted Shull... I believed she really did care for Charlotte	the illustrations	remembering to tell the other play the colour - I forgot at the start and couldn't go back to this choice.	same as before
FRIEND ending	No, we didn't discuss the game at all. Only informing the other what colour we chose.	Conflicted, because they were an alien, in conflict with humans - who I most identify with. But also understanding of why they would see humans that way.	Pity, for being dragged into something I'm not sure she personally wants.	I got drawn into the game and its world. I became fond of Charlotte and Shull and I looked forward to discussing the game with my friend.	My friend and I had different reading speeds so after my choice I usually had to wait for quite a long period of time. This took me out of the story.	Nothing changed.
FRIEND ending	The choices were not impacted by the other player's input at all.	I think she is hardy person, one that is admirable.	Though a 'parasite', I learnt throughout the game that Shull is indeed very 'human', with emotions.	The most enjoyable element for me is the story as a whole. Together with the exciting environment, it is exhilarating and kept me on the edge of my seat, and wanting to know more with each click as the story unfolds.	N/A	I'm glad we came to the LOVE and FRIEND ending, without having discuss our decisions. It sounds like the best possible route, but i don't know if it is, haha.

APPENDIX D

Roleplay-style test of the interactive model between Players 1 and 2, Appendix A. This was the first test done to examine how this two-player one-body model might work.

Alien Parasite: Cannot speak. Can move the body around and make physical decisions (where to go, what to do, etc). Senses are limited and can be compromised.	*NPC & Environmental events and actions*	**Human Host:** Can speak internally, to the parasite. Cannot move the body at all. Has all normal human senses and may notice things the alien cannot.
	You stand on one side of a canal that splits two strips of land apart. In the distance on the far side, the land appears to rise. All else around you is still water as far as your eyes can see. There are flickers of warm life under the surface of the canal, but the water obscures any details. Behind you, the wreckage of your small plane smoulders. It glows red-hot, and you can still see the trail of its descent like an afterimage seared into the sky. You can't figure out how to talk aloud, but you can understand the host when it speaks to you, and can nod or shake your head in response to it. It doesn't seem to have any bearing on the situation; it is just a small voice, sharing this body with you.	
	It is about a hundred meters to the other side, and the water looks deep and black. During high tide, the area where you are would be covered in water over your head. You stand amongst a series of budding blue knee-high plants, sinking a few inches in the mud with every step. The canal between the two islands of land is dotted liberally with giant musty-green leaves, like thick lilypads, each wide enough for you to lie down easily upon them. They look as though they may be sturdy enough to take your weight.	
I move closer to the water and attempt to investigate what might lie under the surface.		
	The water below it is inky black but contains a strong current. The lilypads must be rooted to the far bottom of the estuary floor, or else have their roots intertwined together so that they do not drift away. You cannot see far into the depths.	
	It is not a sharp drop into the water, so you can wade out some distance, potentially.	
I take a few cautious steps into the water.		
	The water comes up to your knees after only a few steps, and you can feel the current tugging at your pants as it seeps through your boots. The mud makes it hard to lift your feet.	
		"COLD COLD COLD oh god that's cold. Can we not go in here."
	There is a voice in your head, a strange unpleasant reminder of the host that is unfamiliar to you. It itches at the back of your mind, unable to be turned off.	
	Despite not moving, it seems that the water is rising a little. It must be low tide currently, but perhaps not for much longer.	
		"There isn't much time if I want to get across… Hello? Can you hear me?"

Appendix D, continued.

I huff and growl. The body's voice is strange to me. I continue wading across the water, less cautiously now.		
	The water is up to your chest before you find yourself without any ground beneath you. Large lilypad-like plants bump around you and your feet tangle in their roots. You might be able to climb up on one.	
		"See those things? They might be able to hold us up. I'd rather not freeze to death if you plan on crossing."
		"Let's just be...cautious. I'm not sure how safe this is."
	As you tread water, you feel something curl curiously around your ankle.	
		"Did you feel something?"
I shriek as best as this body can, and scramble to get on one of the lilypads. No no no no no.		
	The lilypad rocks as you climb onto it, but you're able to clamber up.	
		"You shouldn't stay here long. I dunno what that was, but I don't trust it."
	It's getting dark - night is drawing on - but you think you might be able to jump to the next lilypad.	
I try my best to measure the distance. After a moment to steady the lilypad I'm currently on, I attempt a running jump.		
	You manage to land clumsily on the nearest lilypad.	
	You pause for a second to catch your breath, and when you look up again, you see two lilypads side by side in your path. A moment earlier, you were sure there was only one. They look almost identical. The left is slightly smaller, the right is slightly plumper. There is no other way to cross than to choose one to jump to, or to turn back.	
		"Let's try for the smaller one. I can guide you closer to it. Take a few steps over, maybe…"
	Your vision is getting worse in the dark. You can only see a couple meters ahead of you, and the twin moons aren't giving you much light.	
		"Maybe 15 degrees over. God, do you understand degrees? I hope so."
I take a few steps--slightly bigger steps than I intended, but not too bad.		
	You jump to the left lilypad. It rocks a little, and then starts to sink rapidly underwater. You barely have time to get to your feet before the water is past your ankles.	
		"Shit shit shit, okay, bad plan maybe."
	In the darkness, it is hard to understand what is going on around you. There is a lilypad ahead of you and another to your right.	

Appendix D, continued.

		“Try ahead. Just leap as far as you can, try to feel for it.”
I leap wildly, trying to land on all fours on the pad.		
	You get your hands on the lilypad ahead of you, but sodden wet, it is hard for you to hit your target and you suddenly find yourself struggling to tread water again.	
	The lilypads behind you continue sinking out of sight, and you feel what could be jaws fastening on your leg. No teeth, but a definite pulling sensation.	
		“All right, new plan. Let’s get as far as fucking possible from this place, yeah?”
		“There’s something odd under the water, can you see it at all?”
I don’t have time to look down at the water--I’m too busy struggling to get my leg away from whatever is down there.		
	You kick out at the creature pulling you under and it seems to hesitate briefly, but doesn’t let go. Its tactic appears to be to hold on until the prey gets too tired and stops trying to get away.	
		“What do we have on us? Something to cut this thing away with?”
	You have a small flashlight in your breast pocket and a pocket knife with associated equipment in your jeans pocket.	
		“Let’s try to calm down and see if we can hack through it, and I’ll try to guide us back onto the lilypad if we can make it. I can’t stay in the water much longer.”
I take a few deep breaths, trying to conserve the body’s strength, and nod in agreement. I feel for the knife in my pocket and manage to take it out, but I’m not really sure where to go from there.		
	You feel steadier, and it appears the creature isn’t trying to pull you any deeper, but it’s certainly not interested in letting go. It is very cold.	
		“Maybe agitating it won’t do us much good… Try using the blunt end of the knife, prod at it. Maybe it’ll let us go if we bother it enough.”
	Your fingers are numb, but you’re able to keep a firm grip on the knife.	
I try to poke at it with the blunt end, careful not to make my movements too sudden. It’s a little hard for me to figure out exactly where the creature is, so I focus on poking directly at the jaw where it’s attached to my leg.		
	You fumble underwater with the knife, seeming to do nothing with the first few jabs, but finally you seem to have some success. You feel the jaws loosen in what might be surprise. It isn’t for long, however, but it is a little wary now.	

Appendix D, continued.

		“Can we try to wriggle free? Is it loose enough?”
I growl, unsure, but I try to dart forward all the same.		
	With a kick that seems to surprise the creature, you move forwards in the water and free your leg. You’re now treading water freely. There are a few large lily-pads nearby.	
		“I’m so tired, and cold… Please…”
		“Nearby, some more lilypads, can you see?”
I nod in affirmation and try to swim to the nearest lilypad. The body isn’t responding as well as I want it to.		
	You feel very heavy and clouded, but you are able to swim to the nearest lilypad. With some trouble, you pull yourself out of the water. *You can see the shore in the distance now, even in the darkness. It isn’t far to go.*	
		“Can we stay afloat on the pad? Shoreline is close, I can see it from here. Maybe there’s some way to paddle across.”
I try sticking just my hands into the water and paddling like that.		
	Slowly, you’re able to paddle the lilypad closer to the shore. You are numb but the method is relatively successful. Soon, the water is shallow enough for you to wade to shore.	
	Ahead of you is a semi-aquatic jungle - currently, it is above the water level, but it shows the unmistakable signs of being regularly submerged. There is the faint humming and clicking of a variety of small night-time animals in the trees. You can’t see them in the darkness, but you can see the tiny flickers of heat from their bodies through the leaves.	
	There are faint lights in the distance to the north, crackling above the treetops. They fade away after a few minutes, and appear human-made.	
		“Fireworks, probably. The town is probably setting them off--we must be close. We need to work together to get through this vegetation, though.”
I nod, and start walking slowly in the direction of the lights. I can’t see much, but as long as I can see the lights I’ll know where to go.		
	You find yourself limping slightly, but the jungle does not seem to pose much of a threat. Everything is damp and full of quiet scurrying life, but no large predators seem to be lurking around. *The tops of the trees close off the sky, however, and it is difficult to keep the lights directly ahead of you.*	
	You hear a noise through the trees. It sounds like a voice, but distorted and unintelligible. It is ahead of you in the general direction of the lights, but you are not yet close enough that it can be the source of them.	

Appendix D, continued.

		“Are those humans? Are people nearby? Maybe they can help guide you through here to the settlement! Off to your left, they’re near there I think.”
I’m wary at the idea, but I start to move to the left anyway. This body isn’t doing so well, finding others might be the smartest thing to do.		
	You walk towards the noise of voices. They grow clearer, but you still cannot understand the words. There is a bright light through the trees in a clearing ahead of you, and as you get closer you see that it’s a halogen lamp, lighting a puddle of ground in front of a large silver domed building. There are two men in front of it, talking. One has a handgun at his hip; the other has a glass of beer.	
		“You see them, right? Let’s just try to approach carefully--I don’t want to scare them. Try smiling a little.”
I nod, and walk very slowly towards the men. I try to smile without showing my teeth. I make it very clear with my walk that the body has a limp--I’m hoping they’ll take pity on me and I won’t have to talk. I’m not sure if I can do talking so well.		
	The men glance up from their conversation, falling silent. The one drinking puts down his glass and calls out to you. *You cannot understand what he says, but his tone is cautiously friendly.*	
		“They’re asking why I’m here and why I look… bad. Just try to look harmless. We have an ID they might want to see.”
	You will struggle to talk in this body, although you can try to mimic speech you hear others say.	
I make a quiet, wordless pain sound and clutch my leg. If I try to talk, I’m worried they’ll realize something isn’t right.		
	The man who talked to you looks concerned, and takes a couple steps closer. He speaks, gesturing to your leg.	
	The other man murmurs something to him and turns to enter the building behind them.	
		“He’s asking if I’m injured. Try to gesture to my leg, maybe he’ll understand. I’d rather not stay with them here, I don’t particularly trust these guys, so maybe we can let them know we’re on our way to the settlement nearby.”
I gesture to my leg and try to make a sad face. I’m not sure exactly how to communicate that I want to get to the settlement. I try glancing upwards, looking for the fireworks.		
	The man steps closer, cautiously offering a hand to you. He says something, still frustratingly unintelligible. You see he has a handgun too, tucked to his belt. He is smiling but his eyes are suspicious.	

Appendix D, continued.

		“Don’t take his hand. I don’t like his look. I need you to nod, and look back towards the town. But don’t go with him.”
I nod and look towards the town like the host suggested. I can’t help glancing back at his gun. I don’t like that at all, and I’m wondering if I should try to grab it.		
	The man takes this as affirmation, but withdraws his hand. His mouth is a thin line, and he straightens up, eyeing you. *He speaks, voice no longer casual but gruff.*	
		“I think it’s time for us to leave now.”
I frown, nod at the man again, and begin walking away.		
		“Don’t look back, don’t go back. Try to the right, around the building. I can still see some lights.”
	The man yells after you, but you don’t hear him chasing you. He seems nervous to leave the pool of light in front of the building.	
I head to the right, in the direction of the light. Light seems to be a good thing out here. I pick up the pace a little.		
	You’re still limping, but you make decent time through the trees. The man’s voice behind you fades off. You are left alone, with only the host’s voice in your head for company.	
		“He’s right, the tide is going to rise up again soon. We have to try to make it across.”
I huff and try to push the body to go faster. No more water. Water was unpleasant and bad.		

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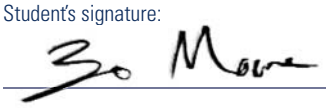

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Dear Bonnie Moore

Re: Ethics Notification - **4000016310** - **Masters of Design, Bo Moore, "Pilot: Navigating personhood in science fiction"**

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